

## **A TOUR IN SOUTHERN ASIA**

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**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO**

**HIS JOB**

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**THE LOST DIARY**

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**NIGHT OF PERIL.**

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SAIGON



**A TOUR IN SOUTHERN  
ASIA (INDO-CHINA, MALAYA, JAVA  
SUMATRA, AND CEYLON, 1925-1926)  
BY HORACE BLEACKLEY  
WITH 21 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS**

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## **A TOUR IN SOUTHERN ASIA**





# A TOUR IN SOUTHERN ASIA

## CHAPTER I

### THE *ANDRÉ-LEBON*

WHEN I asked an official at the offices of the Messageries Maritimes in Marseilles if my wife and daughter might take luncheon with me on board the s.s. *André-Lebon*, his lips curled with contempt.

"They have come to see me off," I urged. "I am your passenger as far as Saigon."

"No meals are served while the ship is in port," replied the Frenchman. "And you won't be allowed on board till three o'clock."

My request had been prompted by memories of the hospitality of the Royal Mail and Union-Castle liners at Southampton, where the friends and relatives of passengers are always welcome. But they have other methods at Marseilles on the ships of the Messageries Maritimes.

It is a long and unpleasant drive to the docks of the great Mediterranean port through a noisy and dusty portion of a very noisy and dusty city. Strange to say, travellers by the French line, unlike those of the P. & O., are not taken by train up to the quay side. Nor is the boarding of a French ship a mere matter of walking upstairs. After leaving the hotel omnibus outside the docks three-quarters of an hour elapsed before we reached the promenade deck and all the way our progress resembled a football scrum.

Within the sheds, where the luggage was inspected, a mob of strenuous passengers were fighting for precedence,

stimulated by their *porteurs*. Blue-bloused Provençals hung around with *petites baggages* jostled and pushed to wedge a way for their patrons, resentful French ladies emitted shrill complaints; stout Frenchmen muttered deep curses against their neighbours. And the whole crowd of them, several hundred strong, were endeavouring to crush through a narrow doorway, leading on to the quay.

“Allons, monsieur . . . attention en bas.”

“Oh, lal-là, on étouffe ici.”

“Sacrebleu! . . . f—f— . . . C’est dégoûtant . . . ces gens-là.”

And when, at last, after a fierce-fought battle, the gangway was reached, one ascended the steep stairway amidst a jumble of baggage, the trunk in front menacing one’s nose, the porter behind probing the small of one’s back with a suit-case or portmanteau. It has not occurred to the authorities to provide two separate entrances—one for passengers and one for luggage.

In the vestibule of the liner, on the deck above the dining-saloon, the blockade and turmoil were increased by the purser and his mate, who insisted that every one should show a ticket. Other companies more wisely delegate this duty to the cabin stewards.

The *André-Lebon* is a fine vessel, alleged by her owners to be 14,000 gross tonnage with 11,000 horse-power; but one would imagine her to be about 12,000 tons by English register, the size approximately of the old *Maloja* and *Medina*, the crack liners of the P. & O. Company before the war. There is a broad deck space, especially forward, the saloons and smoking-room are adequate, and the cabins larger and better equipped than those of any ship going east.

Although our departure had been timed for four o’clock, it was nearly seven and darkness had fallen before we put out to sea. At first, the motion was so tranquil that those below were unaware that the voyage had begun; but, as one passed along towards the dining-saloon at the

summons of the gong, one saw that the piled-up lights of Marseilles were twinkling through the portholes far across the bay. And during the six days' voyage from the coast of France to Port Said, the fickle Mediterranean, whose short choppy waves are more baneful to bad sailors than the roll of the ocean, maintained the same tranquillity. Except on the first night, while passing out of the Gulf of Lyons, when the ship went through a merry dance for an hour or two. It was early in October, when the seas of Southern Europe usually are kind.

One event of interest happened before we reached the Suez Canal. There were troops on board, about twenty officers and fifteen hundred men, and the captain had sealed orders that these should be disembarked for service in Syria. So late on a serene afternoon, when the mists were beginning to shroud the mountain-tops and the western sun was gilding the mosques and minarets, we came to anchor off the ancient city of Beirut, where the soldiers were taken on shore. The passengers lined the rails to watch the departure, but though the troops were bound for the battlefield and the French are a martial race, not a cheer was raised while the crowded barges set out from the *André-Lebon*. A few days later, no doubt, these same troops participated in the "frightfulness" at Damascus.

Each great line of steamships has its characteristic and a definite impression of each lingers in the memory. One recalls the opulence of the Royal Mail with its wealthy Argentines; the affability of the Union-Castle with its genial Johannesburgers; and one thinks only of stark officialdom in connection with the P. & O. and of Australia in connection with the Orient liners. The characteristic of the Messageries Maritimes steamships is *Noise*—din, tumult and uproar! Conversation is carried on in shouts.

The delightful French people, always demonstrative, seem to have grown more vociferous since the war. It is a heritage partly of a tempestuous era; it is partly the result of natural causes. French towns are now the noisiest

places on earth and the inhabitants have to shriek to make themselves heard. Not only is every automobile equipped with a horn, but horse carriages use them and most of the tradesmen's carts as well. In Marseilles I observed an old woman hawker in the street who had a motor-horn attached to her little barrow. So, it is not strange that the passengers on board the *André-Lebon*, whose headquarters is Marseilles—where the volume of trumpeting could not be excelled by an army of rogue elephants—should have acquired the habit of pitching their voices high.

Then, there were *les enfants*, seventy in number, but it was difficult to believe that there were not seventy times seventy. In lung power and virility each was the equal of the most boisterous adult, and peace and quietness could not exist amidst such as these. From morning till midnight they were all over the ship.

The navigation of the *André-Lebon* was admirable. It ran to time with the regularity of an express train. Judged by the results of the voyage no better seamen ever commanded a liner than the brisk bearded captain and his gigantic chief officer. In their own province everything was ship-shape and efficient. It would have been hard to find a spot or blemish either above decks or below, and there seemed splendid discipline amongst the crew. One conjectured that the leakages in the boat deck, which sprinkled drippings upon the passengers beneath during a storm, and the unsightly blisters upon the ironwork of the scuppers, which some one had tried to hide with paint, were due to the parsimony of the Company.

One little occurrence showed the difference between French and English methods of discipline. One morning a young seaman, who was cleaning the glass windows which screen the front part of the promenade deck, let one of the casements slip through his fingers and close with a crash. Nothing was broken, but the skipper chanced to be passing by. An English captain would have called a quartermaster and told him to admonish his subordinate. The captain of the *André-Lebon* took the duty upon himself, rating the

unhappy sailor for ten minutes, shrilly and with gesticulations. And during the scolding the lad stood with downcast eyes and trembling limbs, seeming to shrivel up like a punctured tyre. Nobody ever looked so ashamed of himself. But one could not help thinking that constant repetition would soon make him inured to this sort of thing.

After leaving Beirut our voyage was uneventful; but when we had passed through the Red Sea, where the thermometer reached 92° for four days, the call at Djibouti was an unusual experience—for English passengers, at least, who seldom choose a French liner to travel to the Far East. Djibouti is the chief town of the French Somali coast on the African side of the Gulf of Aden, and is important because it is the terminus of the railway to Abyssinia. Here, as always, there was a cloudless blue sky, by noon the temperature had mounted to 85° in the shade, and the sun-baked little port was shimmering in the fierce dry heat as we were rowed in small boats to the shore. But after recent experiences in the Red Sea the warmth was not intolerable, and Djibouti seemed a not unattractive place with its clean broad streets, its snow-white buildings, and the patches of greenery here and there. Like all French towns it is admirably laid out. From the few passengers who were landing, one heard pleasant accounts of the climate and scenery of Abyssinia.

From Djibouti to Colombo the sea was like a lake, and the north-east monsoon brought cooling breezes. In spite of innumerable imperfections the *André-Lebon* had various compensations to bestow. Although a crowded ship, there was no competition for baths! A time-table was unnecessary. One could walk in and take possession whenever one chose. There was always a vacant bath-room both before breakfast and before dinner, the usual occupant of the place being an industrious Chinaman, busy cleaning taps. And, although the food was not good, the liquor was wonderfully cheap. With the franc at 104 to the pound, a bottle of whisky—Johnnie Walker or Black

and White—cost six shillings and sixpence. The best brands of champagne could be bought for eight or ten shillings, and 1914 and 1915 vintages of Corton, Montrachet and Château-Yquem only cost four or five shillings. A thirsty Irishman, bound for a British colony, took full advantage of these low prices and proceeded to drink his way all through the *carte de vin*. Three weeks later, when he disembarked at Singapore, his wine bill had amounted to £33, though he had been obliged to restrict himself to soda water for several days.

It was eleven o'clock in the evening when the ship came to an anchor in Colombo harbour, and we had to leave at ten o'clock in the morning—an inconvenient arrangement for those who had planned an excursion on land or had purchases to make in the shops. More than twenty years had passed since I was in Ceylon. The glitter of lights from the shore, dominated by the lantern of the old lighthouse, seemed to indicate a place of considerable size; and it was evident in the morning that a new Colombo had arisen since my last visit, a city of great stores and huge commercial buildings. But there was little time for exploration, for the *André-Lebon* set off with customary punctuality, and soon after breakfast the tall buildings had sunk below the horizon, and we were passing along the flat palm-tinged coast towards Galle.

Between Colombo and Singapore—a voyage of five days—the ship was *en fête*. Hitherto, there had been no attempt at festivity, except an occasional carpet-dance in the drawing-room, and two enterprising youths, who had endeavoured to arrange a sweepstake on the ship's run, had met with no success. But now every one seemed imbued with the spirit of carnival. A committee of ladies made a collection of francs from the male passengers, and a programme of events appeared on the notice board :

*Concours des jeux—Enfants, dames, Messieurs ;  
Concert suivi de Bal ; Tombolla ; Bal travesti,  
etc. etc.*



SINGAPORE HARBOUR FROM THE WEST





The loquacious but lethargic crowd became full of energy ; the bar remained open till five o'clock in the morning ; and no one would, or could, go to sleep.

Still, although the French kept late hours throughout the voyage, they were not unpunctual at breakfast. Between 7 and 9 a.m. the dining-saloon was well patronized. Most of the men appeared in pyjamas with bare slippered feet, but the ladies, to the disappointment of some, did not adopt the same splendid unconstraint. And few of the male folk, alas, had visited the bathroom or the barber. Apparently it was a matter of indifference to these people whether the first *plat* was rolls and butter and coffee followed by a plate of porridge, or *vice versa* ; and sometimes bread and marmalade was succeeded by slices of cold ham and the meal was topped by a dish of Quaker Oats. But, as a general rule, the bread and butter were too unpalatable for any except the most robust appetites.

The western entrance to Singapore harbour is picturesque. The narrow channel passes through a cluster of little islands, buried in foliage and with dark-red rocks at their base, upon which there are trim villas with pretty gardens. Here and there an official building crowns the small hilltops, and close to the shore stand the thatched huts of native villages, built in the bright green water upon wooden piles. And as the great seaport draws nearer the harbour broadens, and docks and quays and great warehouses line the margin of creek and bay.

As soon as the ship was cleared, a crowd of ravenous passengers—eager for a wholesome meal after more than three weeks of the cuisine of the *André-Lebon*—rushed to the grill-room of the Europe Hotel, the best restaurant probably in the continent of Asia. Considering it was the first week in November, the weather of Singapore was unusually propitious, for most of the day was bright and sunny with only two sharp rainstorms. Our brief stay—only five hours—was enough to show that Singapore was a more vast and beautiful city than Colombo.

From the capital of the Straits Settlements to Saigon

in Indo-China is a voyage of little more than two days. During the first twenty-four hours the sea remained placid and was only mildly disturbed for the rest of the journey. Soon after dinner on the evening of the second day—the 4th of November, 1925—we came to anchor opposite Cap St. Jacques at the mouth of the Donai river. This is one of the stations of the Eastern Telegraph Company, where a small colony of Englishmen reside in a pretty little seaport with a bathing beach and a good hotel. Here usually there is a breeze and on the night of our arrival the wind seemed almost chilly in contrast to the enervating heat of the Malacca Straits.

About midnight, with the rising tide, the ascent of the river began and in the early hours of the morning the *André-Lebon* was moored alongside the quay of the Messageries Maritimes at Saigon, a distance of forty-eight miles from the sea. In some ways the approach resembles the approach to Santos in Brazil, for there is the same narrow, winding river and the shores bear a similar vegetation. But Saigon cannot boast the vast dock spaces or the wealth of shipping of the South American coffee-port.

The first view of the capital of Indo-China is not impressive. One looks down from the deck of the liner upon a row of dingy sheds and a collection of shabby offices. The yard in front is strewn with coal-dust and seething with a mob of half-naked coolies. Everything is drab and dreary, and there is not a touch of colour anywhere. One makes one's escape from the ship as quickly as possible.

## CHAPTER II

### LES ENFANTS, AND OTHER THINGS

**D**URING the whole voyage *les enfants* had been in supreme command of the ship. The vigorous little band of seventy swept over the decks and raced along the corridors from early morning until late at night. Some were always sliding down the railings of the staircases; at every hour of the day a few of them could be found dancing like young savages in the smoking-room or in the library. There was only one place where they were never seen. A corpulent Yankee tourist, to whom some one complained that an afternoon siesta was impossible, replied with a tolerant smile :

“No, sir, it is not. Whenever I want a nap I take it in the children’s room. There’s never any one there.”

French children seldom go to bed before eleven o’clock at night. Few of them are in charge of a nurse and naturally the parents do not want them astir at dawn. *Monsieur, Madame et Bébé* retire at the same time, so that all may awaken simultaneously in the morning. Thus, the working-day of *les enfants* extends from 8 a.m. till 11.30 p.m. as a general rule, for they are never made to rest in the afternoon.

The amount of physical energy that the children of the *André-Lebon* crammed into those thirteen or fourteen hours is incredible. They were in perpetual motion; the majority yelled like Labour members in the House of Commons all day long. Neither the heat of the tropics nor the unwholesome food impaired their vitality in the slightest degree. None were ever sick or sorry for a moment. Pandemonium reigned everywhere unceasingly.

Most parents know a pastime called "Hide-and-Seek, all over the House"—only permitted on rare and special occasions. On the *André-Lebon* this game continued incessantly from breakfast-time till midnight.

While one was reading a book it was a common occurrence for half a dozen urchins to crawl beneath one's deck-chair in a game of "Follow my Leader." Those who tried to write letters in the drawing-room were disturbed, as often as not, by a youthful coterie that had come to bivouac under the writing-table. Once, while the Captain was in earnest conversation with two or three friends, a crowd of young damsels, between the ages of twelve and fourteen, gathered around and began to howl and dance and throw the deck-chairs about. For a few minutes the Captain tried to continue his discourse, and then, with a shrug of his shoulders and a shake of his head, he gave up the contest and walked away meekly. I wondered what the skipper of a P. & O. liner would have done.

The reproach of infecundity, which is so often alleged against the ladies of France, cannot be used against the wives of French colonists. These fertile folk do their duty nobly. None produce fewer than two babies at least; and, judging from the families on board the *André-Lebon*, three appears to be the average. If the population of France continues to decrease, the balance can always be adjusted by exporting the requisite number of young women for two or three years to Indo-China.

As the voyage progressed the twenty-odd English passengers became more and more wrathful, and many of the better-class French people were even more outspoken and denunciatory; but no united protest was ever made to the authorities. Moreover, it was useless to grumble. When I complained to the Purser, pointing out that no children were ever allowed to misbehave in this manner at home and such rowdiness should not be tolerated on board ship, I was answered by a shrug and the inevitable:

"Que voulez-vous, monsieur?"

In vain I urged that while it was right and proper for

*les enfants* to dominate three-fourths of the ship, one-fourth at all events should be reserved for the grown-ups, so that they might be able to talk and read in peace and comfort. The Purser remained as evasive as a Cabinet Minister at question time, protesting that the officers were striving their utmost to keep the children under proper control and it was impossible to do more than they were doing. What more could I require, demanded the polite and smiling young man.

“Que voulez-vous, monsieur ?”

There came a day, however, when for a little while the children suddenly became well behaved, the fear of retributive justice creating a momentary panic amongst them. The cause of this strange reformation was an announcement that was found one morning on the notice-board at the top of the staircase on Deck C. when the mothers and their offspring trooped up from breakfast :

AVIS

*Ordre à tous les enfants  
de monter sur le Pont E  
Demain soir à 17 heures  
Pour recevoir une bonne fessée  
Pour avoir été si désagréables.*

*Par Ordre*

*Docteur Clic-Clac.*

For an hour or more this notice was surrounded by a babbling crowd, the mothers fuming with wrath at the audacity of the unknown “Doctor Clic-Clac” in promulgating such a threat against their offspring, *les enfants* vaguely apprehensive and asking for explanations in frightened whispers, their hands meanwhile stealing behind their backs protectively. But the maternal responses consoled them, and in an hour or so they were as obstreperous as ever. The identity of the mysterious “Clic-clac” was never discovered.

After *les enfants*, the other great calamity was the food, much of which was uneatable. It is untrue to say that eggs are always bad on board ship, for on many liners they are excellent, but those on the *André-Lebon* were pestilential, and it was disastrous to touch any dish of which they formed a part. The fish, too, was abominable, and so was the bread and butter, and the cooking no better than that of a third-rate restaurant in Marseilles. This is all the more strange, since the cuisine on many of the Messageries Maritimes ships is excellent. It was rumoured that the Company recently had taken the catering out of the hands of the Purser and the *maître d'hôtel* and had given it out to contract. Hence the deterioration, for a little while ago the *André-Lebon* was celebrated for its table.

Before we reached the Red Sea a large number of passengers were ill with various internal maladies, many of them becoming very ill indeed. In some cases the sickness continued for a week or more, and there was a great run on arrowroot and barley-water. One obese gentleman became much alarmed because he was able to see his ribs for the first time for twenty years. Another was even more perturbed because he had lost a stone and a half in weight, until I pointed out to him what fun he would have in putting it back again. And all the time *les enfants* gobbled up the fish and eggs and flourished exceedingly. One little English boy alone had to take to his bed, the only well-behaved child on the boat.

Strange to say there were but two Americans on board, a man and a woman, travelling separately. The lady, aged about sixty—a widow with ample means and leisure—was typical of her class. In America there are many difficult social problems to be solved, such as drink and the nigger, but the most difficult of all is the Woman Problem. America has to solve the problem of how to keep her women in order! I am not referring to the universal predominance of the American female over the male, for that has been an accepted phenomenon for

generations, but to another phase of life in the great continent. In the United States there are thousands of wealthy, restless, ambitious female souls with no occupation, who beat their breasts and cry, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. . . . I want to leave the world better than I found it." And when thousands of rich and idle Yankee women are anxious to leave the world better than they found it there is bound to be trouble.

Our fellow-traveller, Mrs. B.-B. of New York, was making a tour of the whole world with the intention of reforming the whole world, and she proposed to begin with India. It was her ambition to be arrested and deported by the authorities as a dangerous rebel. Of late, the Americans have been reading much in the Hearst papers about the tyranny of the British to the down-trodden Hindu, and in consequence far too many Americans are taking an officious interest in our administration of India. But India did not monopolize the thoughts of Mrs. B.-B. by any means. At all times and in all places she was ready to do her bit in the way of putting other folks in their proper place whenever occasion offered. Her *vis-à-vis* in the dining-saloon happened to be an imperturbable Scotsman, who seemed able to bear the full brunt of her philosophy without any loss of nervous energy. One morning at luncheon the following dialogue took place between them, a sample of many like it :

MRS. B.-B. (*excitedly*). Mr. Kirk, are you aware that there's a couple on board, travelling together, who are not married ?

MR. KIRK (*without looking up from his plate*). No, I wasna aware of it.

MRS. B.-B. Well, what d'you think I ought to do about it ?

MR. KIRK. I don't think it's ony business of yours.

MRS. B.-B. (*with a shriek of protest*). Oh, so you approve of Sodom and Gomorrah !

But all American tourists do not resemble this lady, for, as a general rule, they are the nicest and most well-bred travelling folk that one meets in these days. And it was noticeable that Mrs. B.-B. was far more unpopular with her own countrymen than she was with the English.

In the account of his interesting voyage round the world in 1922, the late Lord Northcliffe remarked that the English tourist has ceased to exist. This must be apparent to every traveller. Before the war, Englishmen of leisure were to be found on every liner, bound to one of our Colonies or to South America or to the Far East. These people made the voyage as a matter of education with their wives, and often with some of their family. Now, when the same class have occasion to travel abroad they stay nearer home, visiting Italy, the Riviera or Egypt. The reason is obvious. It is not that the upper classes at home have smaller incomes, for there are as many rich people in England as before the war. But they are not prepared to pay the extortionate charges of the shipping companies. The modern tourist wants more for his money.

A moment's reflection will show the truth of this. The cost of a passage to every port in the world has more than doubled during the last few years. For the voyage from Marseilles to Saigon, which occupied twenty-eight days, I paid £120, over £4 per day. It is possible to live in many first-class hotels in Southern Europe for a fourth of this price. Consequently, the modern tourist finds that he can make his holiday last very much longer by economizing his journey money. A three weeks' sea-voyage is as expensive as a two months' tour on land.

By an unnatural alliance the shipping companies have been able to advance their rates, which is necessary, they declare, owing to the increased cost of running a liner and to increased capital expenditure in shipbuilding. It is doubtful, however, if the companies are adopting a wise policy. Certainly, in October, November and December their ships are crowded with outward-bound passengers,



and in March, April and May they are filled by those returning to Europe, but during half the year at least they run empty, or have to let out their crack liners on a "yachting cruise." Such an expedient must be speculative in the highest degree; and, since they have killed their former tourist traffic at home through driving away the travelling Englishman by their exorbitancy, a slump in South Africa, Australia, or the Argentine would bring unqualified disaster to many a proud line of steamships.

It would be better, one would think, if the shipping companies were to endeavour to reduce their prices both for passages and freight by reducing their overhead charges. Obviously, there could be much greater economy in capital expenditure. Although the rival lines have ceased to compete with each other in the matter of rates, there is the keenest emulation in producing more and more costly steamships. Most of the expenditure upon sumptuous upholstery, exquisite mural decorations, velvet-pile carpets, swimming-baths and gymnasiums, gilded ceilings and marble walls, might be saved; and a comfortable, plainly-furnished ship substituted with more single cabins and a wholesome cuisine. Vast economies, also, could be effected in the catering department if a capable Swiss *maitre d'hôtel* was placed upon every ship. At present, hundreds of pounds must be wasted during every voyage by the Gargantuan profusion of food served up at every meal. One dish for each course should suffice as in many tables d'hôte on shore. The Dutch have adopted this plan on most of their liners and no doubt are saving huge sums in consequence. The fares of the steamship companies must be reduced in order to unite the Colonies more closely to the Mother Country!

It cannot be said that all of the crew is overpaid and certainly not the firemen; but on some lines the cabin stewards would seem to be in an enviable position. With the full union rate of wages and the new scale of tips, which has risen to great heights since the war, their earnings must be considerable. At the end of the seventeen days' voyage

from Buenos Aires to Southampton the passenger is expected to distribute in largesse a minimum sum of £10.

On the *André-Lebon* the stewards were far less expectant. It is the custom on this ship to hand over one's tips in a lump sum to the *maître d'hôtel*. Upon inquiry I discovered that five hundred francs (or about £5 at the existing rate of exchange) would be considered ample. It did not seem extortionate for a voyage of twenty-eight days, but nevertheless the recipients appeared to be well pleased.

## CHAPTER III

### "PARIS IN THE JUNGLE"

**T**HE sobriquet of Saigon is inappropriate, for the place does not resemble Paris at all, and there is no jungle for miles around. Nevertheless, the term has stuck, having become proverbial, and it suggests a city of charm, which is true.

The approach from the docks, however, as in most Eastern towns, is not attractive. Beyond the gates of the Messageries Maritimes wharf, a dusty road, packed with motor-lorries and bullock waggons, crosses an iron bridge over one of the dirtiest rivers in the world. Its inky waters are crowded with tugs, barges and native sampans, which have brought cargoes of rice from Cholon, the Chinatown, five miles away. On the farther side of the bridge, two or three mean streets lead into a broad, dusty square without a vestige of shade, and thus far the impression is formed that the streets of Saigon must all be sun-baked and glaring. Then, one's rickshaw turns into a cool boulevard, lined on each side with trees whose branches meet overhead, along which it is almost possible to walk bare-headed at midday without risk of a sun-stroke. The shops are as elegant and well stocked as those of a provincial town in France, one half being native, the rest European. It is the Rue de Catinat, the Bond Street of Saigon, running through the centre of the city. Here, there are plate-glass windows worthy of the Rue de la Paix.

Half-way up, this pleasant street is intersected by the Place de Théâtre, where stands the municipal opera house with the Continental Palace Hotel opposite—the leading

hostelry in Saigon. The hotel is well situated—at the corner of the Place and the upper Rue de Catinat—and it has long terraces, cooled by electric fans, and seats in the shade on the pavement after the fashion of the open-air cafés of Paris. The Place de Théâtre is a spacious square, encircled by trees, at the top of the wide Boulevard Bonnard, a street of large stores, cinemas and *brasseries*, which runs at right angles to the Rue de Catinat. The opera house is a handsome building, gleaming in snowy whiteness in the fierce sunshine, approached by a broad flight of steps on the side that faces the Boulevard Bonnard, while the side opposite to the hotel is bordered by a garden.

Relieved to find themselves on shore after four weeks at sea, most of the passengers of the *André-Lebon* seemed content to sit on the terrace and do nothing but watch the kaleidoscopic scenes in the street and the square. The hour of siesta commences at eleven o'clock in the morning in Saigon and soon a procession of cars and rickshaws began to stream through the Rue de Catinat and the Place de Théâtre from the business quarters of the town.

The rickshaws of Saigon—drawn by sturdy little natives—are among the best in the world. The cushions are comfortable and they have pneumatic tyres. These vehicles are owned by a company which lets them out at a charge of a dollar and a half (3s. 9d.) per twenty-four hours. It is the custom for two “boys” to join at one rickshaw, the younger and stronger working during the day, the elder taking the night-shift when the task is lighter. Few are able to ply their trade for more than seven years, when they have to seek another job, often broken in health. But the work of the *coolie-pousse* must be profitable, for there is an abundant supply of them.

In Saigon every one appears to own a motor-car of some species or other. It is the badge of respectability. The humblest clerk persists in keeping his auto, even if he has to live in a garret in consequence and feed on offal. Yet, few of these cars are used for touring purposes. The owner uses them to travel between his home and the office,

though the distance is seldom more than half a mile and could be covered more economically in a rickshaw. During his leisure hours he sits and lounges at the wheel outside an hotel or *brasserie* in order to display himself and his “roadster” to female admirers. If he takes a girl for a drive he seldom goes beyond the town.

But there are less conventional sights to be viewed from the terraces of the Continental Palace Hotel than the bourgeoisie of Saigon in automobiles and rickshaws. Itinerant salesmen pace the pavement all the morning, soliciting custom. One of these is a vendor of furs, a tall, ill-favoured native from the hinterland of Annam, with leopard skins swathed around his body in spite of the stifling heat and the rest of his stock-in-trade in a stout white bundle tied behind his shoulders. Another persuasive salesman deals in gorgeous Chinese embroideries, golden dragons emblazoned upon a black or crimson satin background. A third tries in vain to sell a large fat Buddha in green and white porcelain. There are several persistent peddlars, who proffer coloured-glass beads and little enamelled boxes. They promenade in front of the hotel untiringly.

A ceaseless crowd of Annamite women saunters down the shady streets or wanders through the sun-baked square. Every one of them is garbed in black, loose pyjamas with wide trousers or flowing gown reaching to the ankles. They are graceful little creatures with a superb carriage, swinging their arms valiantly and striding firmly from the hips. Cheerful souls, too, apparently, for they laugh and chatter as they pass along, often walking hand in hand. But there is seldom any beauty in their features, and their mouths reveal a black cavern whenever their smiles disclose their dark enamelled teeth.

Now and then, an Annamite coolie strides through the Place de Théâtre, bare to the waist with a black stuff skirt draped around the rest of him and a broad-brimmed, conical hat on his head, shaped like the roof of a pagoda. He bears a long flexible bamboo pole athwart his shoulders, with a heavy can of water or a bulky pannier filled with

rice or vegetables dangling from either end of it, a ponderous weight usually, which he balances most dexterously as he wends his way in and out of the traffic. The Chinaman, who shuffles along noisily in his clattering slippers, wears a white linen jacket usually, and black or white pantaloons. He is a foreigner, not a native of the country, having immigrated hither as he has done to the Malay States to ply his trade, and he rates himself highly, holding the Annamites in supreme contempt.

In France, as in England, there is a party—recruited from the extreme socialists—which reviles unceasingly the administration of every native colony. To these folk the native is always a downtrodden serf and the colonial official a tyrannical oppressor. They declare that European civilization has ceased to benefit *les indigènes* and protest that France and England ought to cram “education” into the native brain so as to fit him for the functions of government and then abdicate in his favour. Among these protagonists one of the chief Gallic exponents is M. Léon Werth, who has visited Saigon recently and published a volume on Indo-China. The state of mind of this gentleman resembles that of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald when he made an Eastern tour some years ago, and wrote his book on *The Awakening of India*.<sup>1</sup> The essential dogma of this school is that the Hindu, the Mohammedan and the Annamite has “a divine right to govern wrong.” At all costs the European must give way to them.

Apart from the fact that the presence of France in the south-east of Asia has saved Annam, Cambodge and Cochin-China from being dominated by the Siamese or swamped by the hordes of China—which would have been far more detestable to the people of these countries than their present condition—it is untrue that France is a harsh suzerain. On the contrary, her rule seems to be a beneficent one, in many respects more progressive than our own. The Eurasian, as well as the Annamite and the Cambodian,

<sup>1</sup> It is curious to compare this unwise book with *Mother India* by Katherine Mayo.

has all the privileges of a citizen of France. In everything but personal appearance he is a Frenchman. A “touch of the tar-brush” carries no stigma. There is an adequate system of education, as extensive at least as the inhabitants can apprehend at present. Severe punishment is meted out to the European who maltreats a native, and the native has no hesitation in bringing an action against any one who ill-uses him. Both Annamites and Cambodians are recruited for the police and army. And, surest testimony to the benevolence of French rule, the greater part of the population is happy and content, obviously living in no fear of their conquerors. There is no evidence to prove the asseverations of M. Léon Werth that his fellow-countrymen behave brutally to the natives.

Saigon is a beautiful city. Originally, it had no natural advantages. Its site was a swamp; the country around is as flat as a pancake. The great charm of the town is its setting. Although few of its public buildings are superior to those of Singapore or Colombo, they are so admirably placed that they appear much more handsome. The palace of the *Gouverneur-général* of Indo-China stands in the midst of a fine park at the top of the Boulevard Norodom—the long, broad boulevard in which the Cathedral is situated and some of the chief official residences—and excels in magnificence any government house in the East. It has little architectural beauty, resembling a provincial town hall, but its situation is so well chosen that it seems to acquire dignity from its surroundings. Adjoining its park, on the side farthest from the boulevard, is the Jardin de la Ville, a lovely wilderness of tropical vegetation, with fountains and statues and shady paths winding beneath the tangled foliage. And facing the palace at the extremity of the Boulevard Norodom is the Botanical Garden, which contains also a collection of wild animals. Although its show of flowers cannot compare with that of the gardens of Singapore and it does not boast the variety of rare plants and shrubs that are found in the gardens of Buitenzorg and Peradeniya, it has a quiet charm that none of these three

famous places possesses, with its spacious green lawns and its wealth of magnificent trees.

Saigon would be nothing without its foliage. Almost every one of its streets is bordered by trees on either side, the branches often meeting overhead, forming a cool tunnel to temper the fierce radiance of the sun. For the most part the roads are rectangular, and there are miles of umbrageous avenues, as sheltered and shady as the paths of a primeval forest. The Rue Lagrandière, where the city gaol and the residence of the Governor of Saigon stand side by side—"a palace and a prison on each hand"—is protected by such a dense green canopy that twilight seems to dwell there always. One misses these friendly trees in such cities as Sourabaja, Singapore and Colombo. The Dutch and English should take example from the French and plant abundantly, since shade is the greatest boon one can enjoy in a city in the tropics.

The private houses of Saigon are seldom pretty or convenient and cannot compare with the European homes of the Malay Peninsula. Many of the older houses are obsolete and dilapidated, and most of the newly-built are hideous. But the city is not much more than fifty years old; the French like all other nations have been impoverished by the war. If the colony continues to prosper there is no doubt that the villas and bungalows of Saigon will become more worthy of the capital of Cochinchina.

There is much commercial building in progress, and the people already are dissatisfied with their chief hotel, clamouring for a modern hôtel-de-luxe, equal to the best in Europe. Still, there seems no reason for this discontent, for the "Continental Palace" is as luxurious and comfortable as most of the leading hotels in the East. Its bedrooms are clean, airy and well-furnished; the food is well cooked and wholesome, and for a stay of not less than one month the charge need be no more than fifteen shillings or one pound a day, according to the *étage*. The cost of the wines, however, is extortionate. Although the duty



on claret or Burgundy is light, and the price in the shops no more than in France, the hotel charges seven and sixpence for a bottle of Graves, and twelve and sixpence for a bottle of Pommand. And both are new wines, unfit for consumption.

In spite of their denunciations of the “ Continental Palace ” the élite of Saigon deems it chic to patronize its *terrasse dîner*. It is served at small tables, lit with fairy lamps, on the broad veranda overshadowed by the trees of the Rue de Catinat, and from nine o'clock till midnight the scene is reminiscent of a restaurant in the Champs-Élysées. Across the road a smartly-dressed crowd emerges from the vestibule of the principal cinema theatre at frequent intervals during the performance and joins the symposium gathered at little tables on the pavement in front of the hotel. A stream of cars and rickshaws, filled with lightly-clad men and women come to take the air, glides incessantly along the street. A dance, perhaps, is in progress in the lounge of the hotel, facing the square. And, if the opera season has begun, the strains of Verdi or Mascagni float through the open windows of the theatre, and the applause of a packed house is audible to the diners on the *terrasse*. Such is the night-life of the *haute monde* of Saigon, revolving around the opera house, two picture palaces and two principal hotels. At the Hôtel de la Rotonde, on the banks of the Saigon river, it is possible to be served with supper until four o'clock in the morning.

Although there is a Chinese quarter in Saigon—on its western side around the markets and railway station—the city is fortunate in having its real Chinatown located in a separate town of its own, at Cholon, five miles away. The two places are linked both by rail and river, and are divided by open country, for the most part fields of rice. Being a French creation Cholon is less squalid than most Chinese towns, and wide new streets are being constructed to make it more sanitary and attractive. On its outskirts are the splendid residences of government officials, surrounded by luxuriant gardens.

Cholon has more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, Celestials nearly all of them, and is the chief commercial centre of Indo-China. Here are the rice-mills and factories, mostly in the hands of the Chinese, many of whom are rich beyond the dreams of avarice. But whether it is that the French authorities do not approve of "Chink" ostentation or the Cholon Chinaman is a penurious soul, he does not build lordly mansions for himself as he does in the Malay Peninsula, but is content to herd with his family in an upper storey above his place of business. Besides opium, his only recreation is gambling. And, of late, he has taken to the motor-car.

Each shop front is an open aperture, but is sheltered from the sun by blinds or a piazza, and the wares displayed for sale mostly are of a cheap and homely quality. The majority of the shops deal in comestibles, for the Chinaman has as brave an appetite as the Alsatian. Eating-houses abound everywhere. There are several curious pagodas, or Chinese temples, but the Americans declare usually that Cholon is not overstocked with "God-boxes." The town is most picturesque after nightfall when the gay-coloured lanterns are alight in the streets and the brazen clang of native orchestras can be heard in every restaurant. Upon the dark waters of the Cholon river thousands of lamps are aglow in barge and sampan.

The roads around Saigon are excellent, smooth, red thoroughfares branching in all directions through the vivid green paddy fields. But the country for the most part is flat and monotonous in spite of the innumerable plantations of palms, bamboos and bananas, and an occasional picturesque village like Thu-duc, in which native pottery is manufactured. There are two chief excursions, the first to Cap St. Jacques—where there is sea-bathing and a golf-course and the Eastern Cable Company dispenses generous hospitality—a journey of 130 kilometres through miles of forest; and the second to Les Chutes du Trien, a considerable waterfall on the Donai river, forty miles to the north, a favourite place for picnics.



CANAL AT CHOLON



Although there is not a great deal of traffic on the roads, since the French bourgeoisie use their cars but seldom for touring, there are very many accidents. The Annamite is a reckless driver even in private service, and the chauffeur of the native omnibus is a road-hog of the worst description. Animals of all kinds are apt to burst out upon the highway from ditch or jungle without warning, and the domestic sow is the cause of numerous catastrophes. Unless repressive measures are introduced the death-roll of the motor-car will continue to grow as the traffic increases. In Saigon and other large towns there are few fatalities, but the everlasting hooting of the horn—from seven in the morning till long past midnight—is even more intolerable than it is in Marseilles. Both as a lethal weapon and a destroyer of tranquillity the automobile is becoming a greater menace to mankind all over the world as time goes on. The man who can invent a means of preserving it as an instrument of beneficence while curbing its capacity for annoyance and destruction will deserve better of mankind than the whole race of politicians put together.

An event of importance to Indo-China happened in the third week in November when Monsieur Alexandre Varenne, the new *Gouverneur-général*, arrived at Saigon in the *Paul Lecat*. Being a member of the socialist party at home M. Varenne brought with him a larger entourage—aides-de-camp, secretaries and myrmidons, both military and civil—than any previous Governor-General in the history of the colony. In appearance he is a small man with a large beard, bearing a remarkable resemblance to his fellow-countryman, Jean Pierre Vacquier, who died suddenly in Wandsworth Prison in the summer of 1924 after poisoning an innkeeper at Byfleet.

Like most of his party M. Varenne is a man of words, and during the whole of the voyage to the East he talked incessantly both afloat and ashore. It is said that no captain ever spent more time on the bridge than the captain of the *Paul Lecat*, but there was no escape for the unfortunate dignitaries at the various ports of call, whose

duty it was to receive the *Gouverneur-général*. The Governor of Djibouti got it in the neck, as did the Colonial Secretary at Colombo, who was acting for the new Governor of Ceylon then upon the high seas; and Sir Laurence Guillemard, the High Commissioner of the F.M.S., had to listen to the orator for the duration of luncheon at Singapore. The conversational powers of Sir Laurence Guillemard are remarkable and he speaks fluent French, but M. Varenne treated him as though he were a public meeting from the *hors-d'œuvre* to the coffee. It was a one-man show all the time.

The landing of *Son Excellence* took place on the 18th of November. The city was gay with bunting. All the houses were beflagged. The tricolour floated from scores of mastheads. At four o'clock in the afternoon a salute of guns on the quay announced that the disembarkment had commenced, and a quarter of an hour later the cortège was passing down the Rue de Catinat in front of the Continental Palace Hotel. It was headed by nineteen *cavaliers de l'Artillerie Coloniale*, mounted on short-stepping steeds that looked like donkeys in the distance over the heads of the crowd, but may have been mules. Then followed a procession of cars, containing M. et Madame Varenne and their staff along with the chiefs of Indo-China officialdom, the car of the *Gouverneur-général* being escorted by a solitary *cavalier de l'Artillerie Coloniale*, who kept abreast of the vehicle by hanging on to the hood with his hand. And in the rear followed twenty more of the *cavaliers de l'Artillerie Coloniale*, with their donkeys or mules. The pageant moved rather swiftly, and the donkeys, or mules, were hard put to it to go the pace.

M. Varenne remained in Saigon for one week only, during which time he delivered orations from morning until night, with intervals for meals. Every one was astounded at his eloquence. He gave a banquet, marked by customary socialistic prodigality, at his palace to the high officials, and there was a drinking of *vin d'honneur* at the

Hôtel de Ville for the rank and file. Then, he departed on a northern tour en route for Hanoi, the capital of Indo-China and the seat of government, stopping his car to address every little group of natives on the way, averaging one speech for each fifty kilometres.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PEOPLE OF SAIGON

FROM the references in the pages of Pierre Loti one receives the impression that Saigon is a melancholy place. The inhabitants, however, do not seem sorry for themselves in the least and their energy is admirable.

As a general rule the Frenchman reaches his office at seven o'clock in the morning, remaining there until eleven. *L'heure de siesta* lasts for three hours at least, but soon after 2 p.m. business begins again and continues as late as seven at night. The man of affairs in Saigon is not afraid of work. All the shops remain open during the same period, and it is strange to find their windows lighted up at dusk after the early-closing hours of Singapore and Colombo. The Rue de Catinat looks very bright and gay when the ladies come out to make their purchases in the cool of the evening.

For the most part the Europeans live a tranquil family life and are as fond of their homes as the typical French provincial. There is much social entertainment, too, in a quiet way, for the people are hospitable and prosperous. All the same there is no lack of nightbirds, and the hotels and cafés are filled until the early hours of the morning. Small children often accompany their parents, who allow them to sip their beer and taste their liqueurs without protest. Considering the way they are brought up, it is remarkable that *les enfants* grow to be such healthy men and women. It is a merciful dispensation of Providence perhaps that they should be reared as they are, otherwise the virile French race



would become supermen and superwomen, dominating the whole world.

Most visitors to Saigon express wonder at the late hours that prevail, some of them believing apparently that Frenchmen never go to sleep at all. Certainly, many of the residents can spend little time in bed, for the streets are uproarious with cars until three o'clock, while crowds still linger on the terraces of the "Continental Palace" and the Hôtel de la Rotunde. The late-sitter can always find symposiasts.

Every one in Indo-China is ceremonious. A Frenchman will shake hands with the same person on each occasion they happen to meet, even though it is half a dozen times before *déjeuner*. But there is a strange carelessness in personal appearance amongst all classes. Residence in an English colony seems to smarten a man and an inveterate sloven becomes neat and tidy. In Saigon, however, a large number of the better class do not trouble to have their hair cut or even to brush it. If one sees a man with a smooth head of hair one may be sure that he is an Englishman. Even the French officers are slovenly.

Officials seem to abound everywhere. It appears to be a rule never to employ a native if a Frenchman can do the job, the reverse of our custom in India. A drive through the town is sufficient to indicate the extent of the bureaucracy, for one sees in every street the offices and the homes of administrators. Postes, Télégraphes, Police, Justice de Paix, Identification Judiciaire, Salle d'attente, Chef de Cabinet, these and similar *affiches* adorn the walls of scores of buildings. The word *bureau* is one of the most familiar to the eye. Yet, the army does not seem excessive in proportion to the size of the country and is recruited largely from the Annamites.

The term "colony" is a misnomer as applied to Indo-China, though the French are fond of using it, for there are no "cultivators." The European population resides mostly in towns. Unlike Ceylon and Malaya the country

possesses few tea and rubber plantations, and the people who live in the interior are mostly in the employ of the government. Saigon numbers five or six thousand white folk, and there are not two thousand more in the whole of the provinces. Abroad, the Frenchman is the most gregarious creature in existence. Instead of colonists there are shopkeepers.

The impression that the Europeans earn their living in Saigon by taking in one another's washing is difficult to banish. Luxurious *magazins* abound. In the Rue de Catinat and one or two similar streets modistes and milliners, with confections copied from Paris models, display their wares in the shop windows. *Patissiers* and *épiceries* are innumerable, as well as *pharmacies de luxe*, the latter apparently attracting the most customers. There is one big store after the model of Little's in Singapore and Cargill's in Colombo. Evidently, the retail trade provides a large portion of the revenues of the local banks and financial houses.

Apart from the rice manufacture there is little creative industry. Around the port there are no great engineering works. The shipping firms either lack enterprise or opportunity. At the docks few vessels, except French and occasionally a boat of the ubiquitous Blue Funnel line, are ever to be seen. Foreign commerce is repressed jealously by protective duties. Nothing that is not produced at home can ever pass through the customs. Scotch whisky is guarded against like the plague. The only articles to be found in the shops that do not come from France are Swedish matches.

Naturally, under such conditions, the British colony is a small one. Besides the Consul-General and the Vice-Consul, there are only the staffs of the two English banks and a few other men in private business. Their number is less than thirty all told, and at Christmas in 1925 there were only three Englishwomen. Most of them excel in sport, and they are esteemed by their Gallic neighbours.

In proportion to the size of the population Saigon is well provided with newspapers. Three of them, *L'Imparciale*, *L'Opinion* and *Le Courrier Saigonnais*, all published in the evening, are government organs ; while two others, *Le Voix Libre* and *L'Indochine*, are virulently pro-native. It is said that in times past it was a lucrative speculation to produce an anti-government newspaper in order to compel the government to buy it out, but the government has bitten off more than it can chew and is no longer in the market. Nothing could be more abusive than the columns of *Le Voix Libre* and its contemporary, but so far they have failed to induce the authorities to purchase either.

Judging from the crowds of Annamite newsboys, who sell the evening papers in the streets, the circulation of these journals must be a large one. These little blackamoors are most pertinacious in hawking their wares, pestering the people who are sitting in front of the cafés and hotels audaciously. Apparently, they have no fear of annoying their French rulers, and the most impudent of them, and some are very impudent indeed, never receive chastisement. Occasionally, the Arab dragoman, who does sentry duty in front of the Continental Palace Hotel, gives chase to one of them, but he never manages to catch him. It is this lack of fear on the part of youthful Indo-China that does most to disprove the accusations of M. Léon Werth and those who agree with him. It is an outward and visible sign that France is not tyrannical to her subject races.

The attitude of the French towards the Annamite and the Cambodian is a logical one. They tell them in effect :

"We draw no colour line. It is possible for the son of a rickshaw-boy to become governor of a province. Any one of you may take a share in the government, but we will give no preference to you because you are native-born. You have got to prove yourself worthy."

Our policy towards the native races in India and else-

where is the direct opposite. We say to them in so many words :

“ This is your country ; therefore you have a right to govern it. No matter whether you are competent or inefficient the conscience of the twentieth century demands that the principles of self-determination shall be applied to you. Whether you are fit to govern or not you must awake from your ‘ pathetic contentment ’ and try your hand at it.”

Nevertheless, we refuse to admit them into our clubs or ask them to dinner to meet our wives, both of which privileges are regarded by the French as matters of no importance.

In their system of native education the French also seem to be more logical and consistent than ourselves. We over-educate the unworthy native and encourage him to seek European culture, cramming him full of John Stuart Mill and the like, whether he is able to assimilate it or not. An incompetent and often dangerous prig is the result. The French are not so foolish as to allow every black Tom, Dick and Harry to attend a university in Europe, making a selection of the fittest of the students before permission is granted. The son of marplots, and young marplots themselves, are not encouraged to travel west. And the French are not so foolish as to introduce the native to John Stuart Mill.

Many of the better class of Annamites occupy high places in the government, earned by intelligence and integrity. They become magistrates and hold positions of trust in the public offices. Numbers have been decorated with the *légion d'honneur*. M. Maurice Rondet-Saint in *Dans Notre Empire Jaune* has described a banquet that he attended at the house of a rich and important Annamite, named Le Phu of Cholon, where Frenchmen and natives meet on equal terms. One of the sons of Le Phu is a colonel in the French army, another is a flight-lieutenant in the air force. A third son is married to a pretty Parisian, who is said to have in-

curred no social ostracism from her compatriots in consequence.

The whole attitude of the French towards the problem of the half-caste is one of watchful expectancy. At present, there are few Eurasians of gentle birth, but it is probable that they will increase in number as the native becomes more wealthy. Naturally, a rich young Annamite is proud to win a bride from France. Some observers believe that a race of creoles will arise in the course of time, bound to France by ties of blood and gratitude, whose presence in Indo-China will unite the colony more firmly to the home country. Others contend with reason that the history of other native dependencies does nothing to encourage such a supposition and reiterate the adage that the half-caste must always inherit the vices of both parents without any of their virtues.

That the question of colour is of no importance in a French colony is exemplified in the person of Monsieur Cognacq, a gentleman with a dark complexion, hailing from Guadaloupe, who has risen to the position of governor of Saigon and resides in the splendid palace in the Rue Lagrandière, next door to the prison. Previously, he had practised successfully as a doctor and is a strong and capable ruler. His obese figure and suggestive name have earned for him the sobriquet of *fin*.

Although the Chinese usually can beat both the French and the Annamites in most branches of commerce, they find their match in the Frenchman in retail trade. When they meet in the mart the European invariably gets the better of the Celestial. In talk and gesticulation John Chinaman defeats most other folk, but the Frenchman can both talk and gesticulate infinitely more demonstratively and vanquishes him with ease at his own game. But when it is a question of controlling the paddy market or running a rice-mill, where gesture and eloquence are of no avail, the Chinese are first and the rest nowhere.

Both the Chinaman and the Annamite make excellent

servants, the former, perhaps, being the more intelligent as a general rule. Both are good cooks and cleanly in their habits. All the waiters at the Continental Palace Hotel are Chinese, though Annamites are employed to do the housework. They are picturesque fellows, stripped to the waist with a tight-fitting sârong, wearing their jet-black hair in a large cignon. Unlike his compatriot who tills the fields and is a dark wizened specimen of humanity, the Annamite town-dweller has a smooth chocolate-coloured complexion and a skin that looks as soft and sleek as that of a woman.

Few tourists visit Saigon, in spite of the allurements of the famous ruins of Angkor, three hundred and fifty miles inland. The journey up-country is a deterrent. By the river Mekong, which is the more comfortable way of travelling, it occupies three days and three nights, while even by car it takes two long days and parts of the road are dusty and dangerous. Also, it is necessary to return by the same route—since there is no communication as yet with Siam—unless one travels by car to the coast (another tedious drive) and proceeds in a small ship across a stormy sea to Bangkok. As long ago as 1898 a railway line from Saigon across Cochin-China and Cambodia to the Siamese frontier was “authorized” by the Government, but not a yard of it has been laid so far. Its construction, however, is inevitable, for commerce demands it, and France is anxious to attract visitors to its colony, perceiving that the tourist traffic of Java is a most valuable source of revenue.

No one need be afraid of the climate of Cochin-China and Cambodia during the months of November, December and January. Dysentery, which is not uncommon in Saigon—though yielding to treatment more easily than formerly—seldom is troublesome in the winter months, and does not often attack the newcomer at this period of the year. During the daytime it is very hot, the thermometer reaching 86° Fahrenheit, and every one wears tropical clothing—a well-cut suit of ducks being obtain-

able from a Chinese tailor for about twenty shillings. The temperature remains high until after midnight when it begins to cool gradually, often falling sixteen degrees below its maximum towards five or six o'clock in the morning. During my visit the lowest point which the thermometer reached was on the 24th of December about sunrise, when it fell to 68° Fahrenheit. It feels chilly on such occasions, merely because of the variation.

Before my arrival at Saigon I had heard unsavoury accounts of the morality of the city. One much-travelled acquaintance declared that he had never been in any place where the streets were so full of prostitutes. If this used to be so, the police regulations must have become more drastic in recent years, for now the courtesan is inconspicuous and unobtrusive. A cynical Englishman informed me that the profession had been ruined by the competition of amateurs. At all events, when a bevy of bedizened young women from Europe arrived at the hotel in the middle of December—as though they were intended to contribute to the iridescence of the Christmas decorations—they made little appeal to the gilded youth of Saigon, and left by an early boat for some other more hospitable region.

About this period a rumour passed from lip to lip, and for a while it seemed to me that an atmosphere of melancholy pervaded the city.

“Les Sitwells sont morts.”

The words were whispered with bated breath.

“Les Sitwells sont morts !”

There was incredulity as well as some bewilderment.

“Les Sitwells ?” demanded a man in the street.

“Qui sont ces gens-là ?”

“Des fils naturels de Milord Northcliffe, je crois,” answered his friend.

“Alors, des bons amis de la France, c’est dommage.”

Ever since his visit in 1922 the late Lord Northcliffe has been the hero of Saigon. He is the only great English-

man whom the people know by name and they used to believe that there was no limit to his puissance. Anything stupendous that happened in England always was attributed to him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is needless to state that the rumour about the death and paternity of the famous Sitwells was grossly exaggerated.



## CHAPTER V

### COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

**E**VEN the French allow that sport has made little progress in the colony. There is a racecourse at Saigon, but the race-meetings are second-class in comparison with those in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. Both horses and jockeys are inferior and the stakes less valuable. Having had no tin or rubber boom to swell their revenues since the war, the people of Indo-China cannot compete with their English neighbours on the turf.

Naturally, cricket is never played and golf, too, would be non-existent but for the enterprise of the small British community. The nine-hole course at Saigon owes its existence to the energy of Mr. F. G. Gorton, the Consul-General, and is supported by a small band of enthusiasts. At Cap St. Jacques the staff of the Eastern Telegraph Company has a course of its own. The French are fond of football, both Rugby and Association, but, as there are few rival clubs to play against within easy distances, the game does not flourish as it does at Singapore or Kuala Lumpur. Tennis is the most popular pastime by far, and there is a large number of excellent courts at the Cercle Sportif.

This is the chief social club in Saigon, and recently it has built a new club-house, which is as sumptuous as any in the Far East. It is admirably planned, with wide-open windows and spacious verandas, and a suite of lofty reception rooms on both storeys. To celebrate the completion of their lordly pleasure-house the members gave a fancy-dress ball on the night when it was opened. It was

heralded as the most splendid masquerade that had ever taken place in the city.

On the day of the dance a ticket came to me from my friend Max, a burly and volatile young Frenchman, holding a position of trust in one of the financial houses. During the course of the morning he paid me a visit, accompanied by his "boy," laden with a number of appropriate costumes, from which I was expected to make a choice.

"Voilà!" said Max, producing a dark-blue coat and trousers. "This ces your English policemen. . . . C'est tordant, n'est pas?"

Assuring him that it *was* "a scream," I pleaded that the dress was rather too warm for the climate.

"Bien, mais regardez. . . . 'Ere ees une robe de danseuse. . . . Not-ot-at-all."

And while he was displaying the gauzy raiment with pride I hastened to point out that a portly gentleman with a moustache would not look his best in the costume of a ballet dancer. There was some objection to all the rest of the garments and finally it was decided that I should go to the ball in ordinary evening dress.

Max dined with me at nine o'clock that night on the *terrasse* of the Continental Palace Hotel. He was attired in a gorgeous uniform, covered with gold lace, and looked somewhat like Brigadier Gerard. Two or three men in masquerade costumes were seated at other tables, but no women were present, for they preferred evidently not to exhibit their dresses until they arrived at the ball.

It was a serene tropical evening with bright stars and a gentle wind that just stirred the leaves of the trees but did not mollify the moist heat. Beyond the arch of foliage the lights were ablaze in the façade of the Picture Palace across the road, but the electric bell tinkled in vain for patrons, for every one of consequence was going to the Cercle Sportif. The shop windows were in darkness now, all except the one opposite, adjoining the cinema, where hung the sign of "K. M. Mahomet Cany: Changeur de Monnaies: Tabac, Cigarettes, et Articles Divers."

Mahomet Cany always waits until every Frenchman is in bed before closing his establishment. In Saigon they are not so childish as to forbid the sale of cigarettes and chocolates after dark.

We lingered on the terrace until eleven o'clock, watching the crowds in the street, before joining the procession of cars and rickshaws that was streaming along the Rue de Catinat *en route* for the masquerade. It is a drive only of a few hundred yards, through the Place de Cathédral, whose red-brick walls were shrouded in darkness while its tall twin spires tapered indistinctly into the starlit sky. Flitting past the luxuriant gardens around the palace of the Governor-General, where the foliage seemed as dense and clustering as the depths of a jungle, we glided down a leafy avenue as far as the tropical labyrinths of the Jardin de la Ville. Then, a thousand fairy lamps glistened suddenly amidst the trees and a blaze of light poured from the windows of a great building. It was the grounds and club-house of the Cercle Sportif, ready for the festival.

There would have been nothing remarkable about this fancy-dress ball in a fashionable French Spa, but it took place in a corner of Asia more than eight thousand miles distant from Paris. Max—a loyal Saigonnais—came to me a dozen times or more to emphasize this fact, eulogizing the wines and the cuisine, the favours and the costumes of the women on each occasion. Certainly, everything was very gay and bright and well-conducted. The music was excellent and no fault could be found with the newly-laid floor. Five hundred guests at least were present.

We had supper at little tables on the lawn in front of the club-house at two o'clock in the morning, a choice repast such as one might find at Laurent's or the Château de Madrid. The champagne was Cordon Rouge, the same vintage that we drank at the Governor-General's *vin d'honneur*. Temperature was still high, about eighty degrees, and one was conscious of no variation upon coming out of doors from the well-ventilated ballroom. The light breeze was as warm as a tepid bath.

Among the host of masqueraders a company of wooden soldiers—after the pattern of those of the *Chauves Souris*—seemed to attract as much attention as any. They were impersonated by some of the young men of the British colony and looked very comical. But the French chose to take them seriously.

“Vous êtes les grenadiers ?” trumpeted an officer of *l’Artillerie Coloniale*, addressing their leader inquisitively.

“Oui, oui, Monsieur le Colonel, certainement,” stammered the Englishman, realizing for the first time that it would be unwise to confess amongst a martial people that his uniform was a *travestissement*.

There were many ingenious costumes, one especially being unconventional. It was worn by a dainty little creature who assumed the character of an Apsaras, a mythological dancing-maiden represented in the bas-reliefs of the temples of Angkor. She carried on her head a gilded crown, encrusted with sparkling stones, that terminated in a tall spire like the dome of a Siamese pagoda. Golden wings sprang from her shoulders. Her arms were bare and nut-brown like her face, and an embroidered vest and tunic encircled her shapely figure. Tightly-wound gauze scarfs, shot with gold, were swathed around her legs. She seemed worthy to dance before the gods as did her prototype depicted in the temples.

It was five o’clock before Max and I climbed into our rickshaws to go home. He was inclined to be vocal and sang lustily as we glided along the quiet roads towards the city. It was cooler now and the wind had a pleasant freshness. The sky was still bright with stars.

Presently, when we were approaching the corner of the Rue Lagrandière—the street of the beautiful avenue that contained a palace and a prison side by side—we became conscious of a commotion in front of us. The road was blocked by a crowd of natives, who were being held in check by the ubiquitous *l’Artillerie l’Coloniale*. Pausing abruptly in his song, Max bellowed to the *coolie-pousse* to stop and sprang from his rickshaw.

"Allons," he shouted to me excitedly. "Com, com vid me."

I stepped to the ground while he tossed a piastre to the rickshaw-boys; and then, calling me once more to follow him he charged with flapping elbows into the crowd of natives. The Annamites fell aside to left and right as he cleaved his way through their midst, dragging me with him. For a moment or two our progress was checked by a double file of artillerymen, but it was only for a moment. The aspect of the stalwart figure in the glittering uniform, the sound of Max's sonorous voice and the arrogance of his gestures, intimidated the soldiery. And when he announced that he bore an express message to Dr. Cognacq, the Governor of Saigon, a young lieutenant raised his hand in salute and we were allowed to pass onwards. Pushing through the ranks we found ourselves in a deserted street, for all traffic had been suspended.

It was dark beneath the canopy of trees, but objects were becoming more visible in the gardens on either side of the avenue, for dawn was at hand. All at once I realized that we were drawing near to the prison. Just ahead of us—in the middle of the road—a group of men were assembled, a few imperious persons in uniform, a company of soldiers in khaki, a score or more of civilians in white ducks, some of whom had pencil and notebook in their hands. With sudden heart-throbbing I understood at last what was about to happen. A man was going to be guillotined in the open street.

I remembered now certain details of his trial and condemnation, not long ago. He was from Cholon, one Nguyen-van-Gioi, nicknamed Tay, a young Chinaman aged twenty-four, who had hacked an old woman to death with a hatchet. The crime was all the more dastardly because she had been his benefactress and he killed her for the sake of a few piastres. Now, the law was taking its revenge and the guillotine was erected for him.

I passed close to it as I arrived in front of the gaol, two parallel posts, reared opposite to the great gate of the

prison, but it looked shadowy and indefinite in the dim light, the crest invisible in the gloom overhead. And I beheld the impalpable thing without horror, for none of its significance was apparent and the sight of it had no menace. But, as my eyes wandered towards the closed door of the dungeon, my blood ran cold when I remembered who would come forth in a little while. I began to wonder, like all that take part in such happenings, what he was thinking of, what could be the state of mind of the man who was coming out to die. And a flood of pity surged through my heart.

I glanced at the group of men in the road. The soldiers were drawn up in line, Annamites for the most part with a few blacks from northern Africa among them, their faces inscrutable and impassive, callous savages drilled into automata. The sky was beginning to whiten with the coming dawn and the air was almost chilly. Two or three of the imperious gentlemen seemed to feel cold, for they began to walk a few paces to and fro, stamping their feet restlessly, talking in staccato whispers. They were magistrates obviously, come hither on duty, and as I looked at their faces I perceived that each was deadly pale while the lips of one of them were quivering. Amongst the group of civilians, too, there was many a blanched cheek and some of the newspaper men fidgeted nervously with their notebooks. Nobody took any heed of Max and myself. We mingled with the little crowd unnoticed.

All at once I became aware that the great door of the prison was open wide, and from within—faint at first but swelling louder as it drew near—there was borne the sound of wailing. At the same instant, far away at the end of the street where the artillery were pressing back the mob of natives, an exultant clamouring arose like that of wild animals in sight of their prey, for the multitude had heard the cries of the criminal. The wailing within the prison grew more shrill and on the threshold of the open door three men appeared, two of whom were dragging along the third, a creature who was cringing and writhing

and shrieking for mercy. Nguyen-van-Gioi had come out to his doom. In a sudden panic I was seized by the impulse to rush away and take refuge amidst the scenes of revelry that I had just quitted, but an overwhelming fascination made me powerless to escape from the tragic ordeal.

The dawn was breaking and one could perceive that the eyes of the condemned man were ablaze with terror and his face grey and livid beneath his yellow skin. And while they were dragging him into the open air he flung back his head suddenly with wide, throbbing nostrils as though he could smell the presence of death. He had caught sight of the two parallel posts and the faint light that filtered through the branches overhead revealed the cold gleam at their crest. For an instant fear choked him into silence; and then the ashen face was puckered all over and he began to sob and supplicate, piteously and without restraint, like a child who is begging for pardon. A loathsome creature, emerging from the dark doorway a moment later, hurried to the aid of his two assistants and the shrinking Nguyen-van-Gioi was pushed onward to the guillotine.

Monsieur de Saigon and his myrmidons were swift and ruthless in their task. In a few seconds their victim was forced down upon the plank and lay bound and prostrate, his head thrust through the wooden collar at the base of the two posts. And when, rebellious to the last, he had managed to arch his shoulders and draw back his neck, the executioner seized hold of his hair and the assistants tugged at his feet to pull his body into a horizontal position. At that moment some of the onlookers intercepted my view, but I turned away my head all the same. Then came a thud and I knew that the knife had fallen.

A few minutes afterwards we were striding down the Rue Lagrandière, while Max—who had been talking to one of the warders of the prison—was babbling particulars about the criminal.

"Il avait peur, une peur abjecte," he assured me. "Il n'a rien voulu boire, il n'a pas voulu fumer . . ."

And he informed me that some of the officials, observing that I was wearing a dress-suit, imagined that I belonged to the entourage of the *Gouverneur-général*.

"Le bon Monsieur Fin," Max continued in French, as we passed along in front of the residence of the Governor of Saigon. "He has had a party, I should imagine, to watch the spectacle. Il est bien placé."

Which was a slander on the excellent Dr. Cognacq.



## CHAPTER VI

### L'AFFAIRE BARDEZ

**D**URING my visit to Indo-China it was usual to see a group of Frenchmen in angry altercation, bawling at each other and waving their fists on high. On such occasions it was safe to assume that they were discussing *l'affaire Bardez*—an event that had cleft the whole of the colony into two hostile factions, arousing quarrels between father and son and alienating many a loving husband and wife. In fact, it was *une affaire* after the heart of the brave French people and they revelled in it immoderately.

It has been demonstrated previously in these pages that the natives of Indo-China live under a benevolent government; but, although it is true that most of the civil servants are just and humane administrators, there are some in the more remote parts of the country who have been harsh and tyrannical. It is because many loyal Frenchmen believed that Monsieur Bardez belonged to this latter class that they condemned his methods and took sides against the authorities; while officialdom, of course, and all that went with it, was obliged to defend its representative. The trouble arose owing to the necessity of additional taxation in order to raise a larger revenue. The people of Indo-China, like the people of France, do not approve of taxes, and Bardez was one of the officials whose duty it was to persuade them to pay.

He was the Resident of Kampong-Chnang in Cambodge, a district that is due north of Phnom-Penh, the capital of the state, lying between it and the Great Lake. A man in the prime of life, he had earned a reputation for zeal and

efficiency, but there were some who said that he was apt to be reactionary and unsympathetic in his treatment of the Cambodians. Like other residents it was his custom to make a tour of his territory at fixed periods to collect taxes from the natives with his own hands. Always a troublesome task, his duty became more onerous when the government decided to make an increase in taxation in the autumn of 1924. Bardez had the greatest difficulty in getting in his revenues.

For a long time the natives of Cambodge had been growing more discontented and more suspicious. To their simple minds it appeared that they were being robbed. A government official came along in a sumptuous car and compelled them to pay a large sum of money and drove off with the spoils. Since he was living in luxury, in a fine house with many servants, the poor peasants began to believe that the man was spending their money on himself. Possibly this notion was confirmed by the efforts of agitators who, throughout the length and breadth of Asia, never lose an opportunity of bringing the European into disrepute. And naturally the resentment of the natives was fanned into a fiercer flame as soon as heavier taxation was imposed upon them.

Bardez paid no heed to their indignation. He had a certain routine to perform and he took care that it was accomplished. It was no new experience to encounter a strike of taxpayers, for he had never known *les indigènes* anything but loath to pay tribute and the present ferment seemed no more formidable than many a previous one. So the Resident of Kampong-Chnang went about his business in the usual way and employed the methods to which he had been accustomed, heedless of the danger that was encompassing him.

Although the methods of Monsieur Bardez were drastic in the extreme they appear to have been no more arbitrary than those of our own tax-gatherers in England. If the Cambodians could not, or would not, pay he inflicted fines and imprisonment. Whenever a particular village was back-

ward in its contributions he was in the habit of rounding up the menfolk and clapping them into gaol until the tribute was handed over. On such occasions the unfortunate women had to toil all the harder in the fields in order to ransom their men.

For the most part the natives were very poor. Although deft and laborious, with no other vice than an occasional debauch of *choum-choum*,<sup>1</sup> the Cambodians are improvident creatures and usually are in debt to the Chinese shopkeepers. Often enough, when they asseverated shrilly to the revenue officers that they had no money at all, they were speaking the truth. But those sitting at the receipt of custom in the district of Kampong-Chnang turned a deaf ear to all such protests and never showed any leniency.

There is an example of the friction that existed in this part of the state between the natives and their rulers in the story of a deputation of Cambodian wives, who paid a visit to one of the underlings of Bardez. They told the official that their husbands were in prison and they could not pay their taxes.

"You've got to find the money," he snarled. "So you'd best turn prostitutes and earn it that way."

Then one of the elder women sprang out from among the rest and replied to the insult with a fine spirit.

"You know that's impossible," said she. "Because we are old and ugly and no man would look at us. But there's your wife now . . . she's pretty and scented. . . . *She* could earn money for *you*."

Stung by the riposte the young man lost his temper and struck the old woman in the face, whereupon all the rest of them set upon him with tooth and nail. And he was so mauled and beclawed that he had to keep within doors for a week or more in order to hide his scratches from the public gaze. At first, he resolved to take legal proceedings against his assailants, but he was dissuaded by his friends, who warned him that he would make himself the

<sup>1</sup> A native brandy, made from rice.

laughing-stock of the colony. There was no love lost between Bardez and his entourage and the natives of Kampong-Chnang.

One morning—on the 18th of April, 1925—Bardez drove in his car to Krang-Léou, a village in his district with a native clerk and an armed militiaman. In this particular place the inhabitants had not made any response to his demands, and no revenue had been forthcoming. Consequently, the Resident resolved to take drastic measures. Seating himself at a table in one of the huts—a shanty that was open on all sides with a palm-leaf thatch—he proceeded to hold a court and summoned the people of the village before him. As soon as they had assembled he placed a dozen of the men under arrest and announced that he would hold them to ransom until the taxes had been collected.

Presently a woman emerged from the crowd, the wife of one of the arrested men, and coming to the table paid the tribute that was due. When the money had been accepted she asked if her husband might be released.

"No," answered Bardez—or rather, it is reported that he answered thus—"I'll let none of you Cambodian dogs go"; and it is said also that his clerk was indiscreet enough to translate this speech into the native tongue.

As a general rule the Cambodians are a submissive race, but sometimes they are apt to run amok, and on this occasion they appear to have been goaded into fury. The various accounts are conflicting, but there seems to be no doubt that Bardez both spoke and acted unwisely, without a thought apparently of the provocation that he gave. Whatever he said or did, there is no uncertainty about the result of his behaviour. In a very short time the unexpected had taken place, and he found himself in the midst of a fierce riot. According to an eye-witness, Bardez commanded the militiaman to level his rifle at the crowd as soon as they gave the first sign of getting out of hand. It was the only weapon that the little band possessed, for the Resident and his clerk were unarmed. But it is evident

that no shot was fired. However lacking in tact poor Bardez had been, he was not guilty of bloodshed.

It is supposed by some that the natives were unable to restrain themselves any longer as soon as the gun had been levelled. It was alleged afterwards that a man in the crowd hurled a heavy stool, which struck Bardez on the head, knocking him senseless to the ground. At all events, whatever happened at the onset, the villagers were soon rushing *en masse* upon the three officials, and when their resistance was overcome—which happened in a moment or two directly the rifle was wrested from the militiaman—the whole crowd ran amok and battered the unfortunate men mercilessly with stones and cudgels. In a few moments all three of them were lying dead beneath the palm-leaf thatch. It was one o'clock in the afternoon.

Within a short time the news of the event had reached a military depot in the neighbourhood and a party of gendarmes marched upon the village of Krang-Léou. There had been no more rioting since the slaughter of Bardez, but a restless mob was parading the street, and it was necessary to fire a volley before the people would disperse. Inquiries were set on foot promptly, with the result that nineteen of the ringleaders had been arrested before sunset. These were sent to the gaol at Phnom-Penh to await trial.

The murder of a Resident is a dreadful occurrence always, and the tragedy of Krang-Léou caused the greatest horror throughout the length and breadth of Indo-China. The newspapers printed long columns with full descriptions by special correspondents. Scarcely any other topic was discussed among Europeans. The police and the administrators took steps at once to prevent assemblages of natives in other parts of Cambodge. Every white man was shocked at the murder, and the hearts of all were full of compassion for the widowed Madame Bardez, who was a young and pretty woman. And arising out of the crime *une affaire* was evolved which became in due course a sort of local *affaire Dreyfus*. Soon the whole of Indo-China

was divided into two parties—the champions and the accusers of the government. No such sensation had been known in the colony within the memory of man.

The pro-government party, as a matter of course, denounced the murder as one of the most cowardly and despicable outrages of which the natives ever had been guilty. It was prophesied that more tumults would follow, and that the life of no white man was safe in isolated parts of the country. Every supporter of the government called for stern reprisals, protesting that the honour of France demanded that the murder of a Frenchman should be avenged in the fullest degree. "*Justicia fiat*," they shouted, and "*vive la République!*" And the three government newspapers—*L'Imparciale*, *L'Opinion* and *Le Courrier Saigonnais*—while affecting the time-honoured journalistic pose of impartiality, were just as zealous in their support of authority.

Poor Bardez was invested with the crown of martyrdom and was eulogized as the beau-ideal of a civil servant. It was denied emphatically in every bureau that he had been harsh or arbitrary. According to his colleagues he was a zealous and hard-working official, a much-harassed man, who had to administer a turbulent part of the kingdom of Cambodge and did his duty nobly. He had died for his country, the government party declared, as surely as any soldier on the battlefield, and his country must take care that vengeance was wreaked upon his murderers. It was essential, moreover, that a salutary example should be made in order to put the fear of God into the hearts of those "dogs of Cambodians."

The anti-government people—and this party included many who had never held "pro-native" sentiments previously—lamented the crime and denounced the criminals, but asserted that the chief blame must rest with the authorities. The zeal of the unfortunate Bardez could not be questioned, said these critics, but they denied that he was a just or a sympathetic administrator. On the contrary, they alleged that he had been cruel and tyrannical

on many occasions. Yet Bardez was by no means the villain of the piece, these critics contended. He was only the Resident of a district, a mere pawn, subservient to the great man above him. The arch-villain, according to the anti-government folk, was none other than Monsieur Baudouin the *Résident-supérieur* of Cambodge, one of the four or five most important men in Indo-China after the *Gouverneur-général*.

Wholesale corruption was hinted at. Anti-government newspapers, like *Le Voix Libre* and *L'Indochine* did not scruple to declare that the rulers of Cambodge had been feathering their own nests for years and that a considerable percentage of the new taxes had never reached the coffers of the state treasury. It was alleged also that additional taxation would have been unnecessary if the administration had been an honest one. Bardez had been encouraged in his drastic conduct by his *Résident-supérieur*, vociferated *Le Voix Libre*! The natives had been pillaged in order to fill the pockets of officials! These, and many other incredible accusations, were scattered broadcast by the anti-government press.

The story of the green bronze is an example of the virulence of these malicious calumniators. This image, which had come originally from some temple in Cambodge, belonged to the *Résident-supérieur* and had been taken to Monsieur Baudouin's villa at Nice. One day it was stolen and eventually the theft was traced to a workman, who was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. As luck would have it, the report of this incident appeared in the colonial newspapers about the time of *l'affaire Bardez* and the anti-government journals could not resist the opportunity of lampoon. Who was the original thief? they demanded. Was not the *Résident-supérieur*, who purloined a valuable antique from a native temple just as great a criminal as the humble Niçois who stole it from a villa in Cimiez? Did not Monsieur Baudouin deserve to be put into prison also? The story was reprinted over and over again and became

the favourite gibe of the Adullamites against Monsieur Baudouin.

There were many moderate men, however, among the hostile critics of the government, who had no belief in the accusations of corruption. But these people had decided that the government was inefficient, extravagant, and wholly out of sympathy with the subject races over whom it ruled. These critics of the government believed that it was entirely owing to official waste and prodigality that more taxes had to be levied, which was the principal cause of the present discontent. A feeling of pity for the natives had been aroused on this occasion because it seemed probable that they had been exasperated beyond endurance by the burdens placed on their shoulders. Moreover, it was obvious that the crime had been unpremeditated and was provoked possibly by the notorious truculence of poor Bardez. Thus, it came about that the anti-government agitation gained many unexpected adherents. *L'affaire Bardez* was used by every malcontent as a convenient bludgeon with which to belabour officialdom. This was the reason why the *cause célèbre* created so much dissension in the colony and why it was usual to behold a group of Frenchmen, shouting at each other and waving their arms in the air.

The trial of the nineteen villagers, arrested at Krang-Léou, took place at Phnom-Penh, the capital of Cambodge, early in December. Determined that no guilty man should escape, the authorities had assembled a host of witnesses and had engaged the best forensic talent they could procure. The pro-native party, too, had retained several counsel of repute, one of whom proved to be as tempestuous an orator as the *Gouverneur-général* himself. Nearly all the newspapers in Indo-China were represented by special correspondents.

At first, the odds were in favour of the capital conviction of one-half of the accused men, but Maître Gallet, the chief *avocat* for the defence, put up a stubborn fight, pulverizing the witnesses for the prosecution one after



another. And at the same time he trounced the government officials lustily, sparing no one and inveighing against the *Résident-supérieur* with bitter sarcasm. Before the close of the trial he had made a great reputation, being acclaimed as the finest advocate in Indo-China. His closing speech, a skilful and passionate piece of oratory, thrilled every one who heard it.

But Maître Gallet had achieved his greatest sensation a few days earlier when he announced to a startled Court that some one had put poison in a cup of tea that he had ordered at a local hotel. And he insinuated, moreover, that it was the work of some creature employed by the government. Every one was dumbfounded at the revelation; nothing else was talked about for a week. An air of mystery seemed to have encompassed the city. It was as though a host of secret conspirators were at work. To attempt to poison *un avocat* with a cup of tea during the course of a State Trial! No outrage could be more infamous and detestable.

Still, although it is true, no doubt, that the clever Maître Gallet was nearly poisoned by a cup of tea, I am convinced that he was mistaken in supposing that the government authorities were responsible. Any one who drinks a cup of tea in an hotel in Phnom-Penh runs the risk of sudden death. I have tried it and I know. At Phnom-Penh I was nearly poisoned myself by a cup of tea.

The trial came to an end on Sunday, the 20th of December, and the verdict and sentence were delivered at nine o'clock at night. It was inevitable that there should be a capital conviction, for public policy demanded a blood atonement, but no doubt the eloquence and ingenuity of Maître Gallet saved the lives of many of the accused men. So only one of them was condemned to death, a peasant named Chouan, who suffered the same fate as Nguyen-van-Gioi early in the New Year. Four other wretched peasants were sentenced *aux travaux forcés à perpétuité*, a fate far more terrible than the guillotine, while four

more were condemned *aux travaux forcés pendant quinze années*. The rest of them received minor punishments.

Thus ended the legal process arising out of *l'affaire Bardez*, but "the affair" itself continued to be debated as vigorously as ever. During the two months that I lived in Indo-China it had been the principal topic of conversation. Long after my departure it monopolized public attention still.

## CHAPTER VII

### VERS ANGKOR

**T**O come to Indo-China and not to go to Angkor is equivalent to paying a visit to Egypt without seeing Luxor.

In making the tour to these wonderful ruins it is better to travel by water up the river Mekong. Three advantages will be gained by this route. The second day's journey by car along the abominable roads of Upper Cambodia will be avoided; it will be unnecessary to spend the night at the hotel at Phnom-Penh, which a motorist always must do; and it will be possible to observe the country in a leisurely fashion from the deck of a comfortable steamboat. Those who rush through strange lands in an automobile often see little farther than their noses. Usually, one can obtain much better views from the window of a railway train.

Soon, perhaps, it will be possible to travel in a *train de luxe* from Saigon to Angkor, via Phnom-Penh. No doubt the line would have been finished long ago had there not been so many engineering difficulties to overcome. For it will be necessary to build embankments and construct viaducts in many parts of Cochin-China, since the Mekong is an intractable stream, diverging into innumerable branches and inundating vast portions of the country during the rainy season. Still, even when there is a railway the tourist will be well advised to travel by water. The great river reveals the heart and soul of the colony more intimately than any other of its highways.

The *Jules Rueff*, in which I made the journey from Saigon, is the latest and most modern of the fleet belonging

to the Compagnie des Messageries Fluviales. It bears some resemblance to one of Cook's steamers on the Nile, having a double tier of cabins and a wide promenade deck with a large dining-saloon forward. The meals are good, and the Chinese stewards capable and attentive. One lunches at eleven and dines at seven o'clock. The *petit déjeuner* can be ordered when one chooses. The voyage lasts for three nights and three days, for a whole day is spent at Phnom-Penh where one must change steamships.

The *Jules Rueff* left Saigon at nine o'clock at night from a quay on the Saigon river, opposite to the Hôtel de la Rotunde, at the end of the Rue de Catinat. Earlier in the day the porter of the "Continental Palace"—a resourceful Chinaman, who can procure at a price even a bottle of prohibited Scotch whisky—had placed my baggage on board and had locked it in my cabin, the key of which he presented to me on his return. The cabin proved to be roomy and comfortable with two berths, but there were no mosquito curtains; and, as we were descending the Donai river, where mosquitoes abound during the whole night, sleep was impossible. Soon after daybreak we had entered one of the mouths of the river Mekong, and about eight o'clock we reached a town called Mytho, where we were joined by the other passengers who had made the short train journey from Saigon, which takes only two hours. Most people, however, to avoid early rising, prefer to travel all the way by boat.

The Mekong—one of the great rivers of Asia—has the appearance of being as vast and abundant a waterway as the Nile, but except in volume and breadth there is no other resemblance. Instead of the bare plains of Egypt there is the luxuriant vegetation of southern Asia, dense plantations of tropical trees that cluster along the banks of the stream on either side for miles and miles of its course. In place of long ranges of sandhills the country everywhere is a flat green rice-field as far as the eye can discern with seldom even a mound to break the monotony of the panorama. And the river itself seems to have a more swift

and tortuous current than the Nile with twists and bends and whirling eddies; for it rises amidst the everlasting snows of Tibet, more than two thousand miles from the sea, and is sped on its course by a wide watershed of mountain torrents.

The native huts, dotted everywhere on the banks of the river, sometimes standing in and sometimes out of the water, are built upon tall wooden poles driven firmly into the earth, so that they will remain high and dry during the periods of inundation and be secure from the attacks of wild animals. They are fragile structures, made of bamboos and covered with a thatch of palm leaves. Sometimes scores of them are huddled together, forming a populous little village. Generally, there is a plantation of coco-nut trees and bananas close to such colonies. The inhabitants work in the paddy fields, but many are fishermen too, for all kinds of fish abound in the Mekong and its tributaries.

Native craft of various shapes throng the water, some of them being in sight always. The heavy sampan, with its roofed cabin, is propelled by four rowers, two in the bow and two in the stern, who stand upright and push their oars with a forward thrust, their bodies swinging in a graceful sweep at every stroke. Some wear the sârong, a long shirt wound tightly round the hips, while others are dressed in loose black trousers. There are hundreds of small light canoes, also—hollowed out from palm trunks—that hold only two men, but are useful for casting nets. Often a wooden barge floats down the river, a vessel with a mast and sails, bearing a cargo of rice to Cholon.

All day long the *Jules Rueff* was steaming up stream against a brisk head-wind from the north and, since every one on board was wearing the thinnest clothes, the breeze seemed almost chilly. Most people sought the lee-side of the deck and took shelter behind the dining-saloon or the line of cabins. For the most part there was bright sunshine, but a brief rainstorm came now and then, accom-

panied by the most brilliant rainbows, rising far away from the river bank amidst the rice-fields.

The steamer often stopped at a riverside town, some of them being large boroughs with thousands of inhabitants. At all these places the Chinaman seemed to have dug himself in effectively, for his picturesque signs, with their black or yellow or crimson letters, were placarded outside every shop-front. Occasionally, too, the tiled roof of one of his ornate pagodas rose above the other housetops, with gold and green dragons—cunningly carved—fighting savagely upon the highest summit. Most of these towns apparently possessed considerable wealth, for many fine cars were to be seen in the umbrageous boulevard which always skirted the river-front, as well as numerous gharries drawn by sturdy little horses. On the outskirts were handsome villas in shady gardens, obviously the residences of government officials.

At each of the stopping-places a crowd of chattering natives—who had been travelling steerage—disembarked from the steamer, to be welcomed with shrill clamour by their friends on shore; while another small throng besieged the gangway and fought their way aboard, cheered on by the neighbours who had come to see them off. Every landing-stage was littered with itinerant hawkers, who spread their wares on palm-leaf mats on the ground, piles of green coco-nuts and glutinous cakes, strands of tough bread and polychromatic sweetstuffs, interspersed with the inevitable banana. But the wares on the whole, save for the *green* coco-nuts, did not differ much from those sold by the street-huckster in Europe. These pedlars did a brisk business with their compatriots on the ship, some of whom always had need to fill up their nose-bags when the steamer stopped.

Parts of the river were very beautiful—especially when one passed some tributary that branched off through the paddy fields between high walls of waving palm trees and feathery bamboos, one of the many mysterious little waterways that wander from the main stream like a back-

water on the Thames ; or, just upon the close of day, when one came to a tiny cove, encompassed all around by a thick belt of forest, where crowds of naked urchins were sporting in the water, their wet skins gleaming like copper in the setting sun, their laughter tinkling merrily across the river in the warm still air. The sunsets are gorgeous on the Mekong, when the sky is ablaze with crimson flames, bathing the stream with the radiance of its reflection until it looks like a river of blood.

At dinner that evening a little boy of five sat opposite to me with his parents. The menu was long and exhaustive, but he partook of every course from the egg to the apple, refusing only some boiled fowl. Towards the end of the meal the mother dipped a lump of sugar into her glass of cognac and gave it to the child. As a result of the climate and injudicious feeding the poor little thing was as white as the tablecloth. A life in the tropics must play havoc with the health of these unlucky mites.

At 5.30 on the following morning the *Jules Rueff* reached the quay at Phnom-Penh, thirty-two hours after leaving Saigon ; and, since the steamer for Angkor did not leave until the evening, it was necessary to have one's luggage taken to the hotel, which was opposite to the landing-stage. Phnom-Penh is an attractive city of about 80,000 inhabitants, situated at the junction of two rivers, and like most of the towns on the Mekong it possesses a broad boulevard on the river-front with an avenue of trees. Trees line many of the streets as in Saigon, and in the midst of the European quarter there are beautiful botanical gardens, containing aviaries and cages of wild animals. The gardens surround a small hill, called the Phnom—whence the town takes its name—which is crowned by a Buddhist monument with a conical spire. A steep flight of steps leads to its summit with twin images of Naga, the many-headed serpent, carved in stone at the base of the balustrades.

During the course of the morning I came across an example of official rudeness. I carried a letter of intro-

duction to the *Résident-supérieur* from one of his intimate friends, who happened to be an eminent Frenchman. It was a charming letter, in which the writer spoke of his recent visit to Phnom-Penh in terms of rapture, and, describing myself as *un auteur très connu*, he begged Monsieur Baudouin to do what he could to assist me. I knew that it was unlikely that I should see the *Résident-supérieur*, as this was not one of his official days, while his time was monopolized by *l'affaire Bardez*. But I called upon his *Chef de Cabinet*, as is the custom, and sent in my card and letter of introduction with a request for a brief interview, since I was anxious for a recommendation to the government archæologist at Angkor. One would have supposed that the letter from Prince — to his Chief would have induced the minor official to spare me a few moments, but he kept me waiting in the *salle d'attente* for a couple of hours as though I had come without any credentials at all. Finally, when I asked the hall porter how soon *Monsieur le Chef de Cabinet* would be disengaged I was told that he had quitted the building and would not return until two o'clock. Evidently the slight was not unintentional, for when I wrote both to the *Résident-supérieur* and to his deputy to express the hope that there had been no breach of etiquette in my visit no answer was returned. The affront, of course, concerns the sponsor who gave me the letter of introduction rather than myself.

Although Pierre Loti and other travellers have written of the royal palace at Phnom-Penh as if it were a place of charm, I fancy that most people will agree that it is tawdry and meretricious. It looks so new, and, judging from pictures, would seem to be a feeble imitation of the architecture of Siam. There is an ostentatious glare and glitter in its white and gilded buildings, and as one stands within its two spacious courtyards one beholds a bewildering spectacle of filigreed domes and tapering pinnacles. The chief adornment of the first quadrangle is the *salle du trône*, where the royal receptions are held, a large hall crowded with inartistic furniture and gaudy upholstery.



In the second court there is perhaps a more interesting edifice—*la Pagode d'argent*, named Vat Prah-kéo—a temple of Buddha, copied from that in Bangkok. Within, the chief curiosities are a floor of solid silver tiles and a large golden statue of Buddha himself encrusted with diamonds and precious stones. Among other buildings in these two compounds there is a *salle des fêtes* and a *salle des danses*. The king lives in an unpretentious residence with a houseful of wives close at hand.

More attractive by far than the royal palace is the Cambodian museum which contains a collection of sculptures and bronzes, jewellery and weapons of war, fashioned by the Khmer craftsmen a thousand years ago and discovered during the excavations in the ruins of Angkor. The traditions of these old artists are being preserved in *L'École des Arts Cambodgiens*, which is carried on in an adjacent annex, where native pupils are taught to copy or imitate the carving and embroideries of their ancestors. This school is conducted by Monsieur Georges Groslier, the leading authority on the civilization of ancient Cambodia—the land of the Khmers of Angkor—and appears to be a prosperous enterprise.

The steamer for Angkor leaves at nine o'clock at night, and, as nothing is to be seen in Phnom-Penh after sunset, I was glad to take refuge on the steamer—a small ship called the *Bassac*—as soon as possible. Here I found that I was the only passenger, so had the choice of the best of the cabins on deck, in which the berths were all protected by mosquito curtains. Our departure was punctual. Soon after nine o'clock we were moving away from the quay, and in a little while the lights of the city were lost in darkness.

Daylight showed that the tributary up which we were making our course was much narrower than the Mekong, and from the bows of the ship it was possible to observe each bank of the stream simultaneously. *Les villages flottants* became more numerous, and their inhabitants all seemed to be fishermen. Slender rows of poles for spreading

nets appeared above the surface of the water everywhere. It was obvious that fish must abound because of the hosts of enemies that prey upon them. During the day we passed flocks of herons, cormorants and pelicans. The plump kingfishers, sitting on a post or some overhanging twig, were the size of pigeons, sleek iridescent creatures glittering in the sunlight. And there are hundreds of other members of their family, birds with black and white plumage, looking like magpies except for their manner of flight. Several times a couple of fat otters flopped into the water from the branches of a tree.

Before noon the river had grown wider and the steamer proceeded with more caution, the captain taking soundings frequently or seeking information about the depth of the stream through a megaphone from a sentinel in one of the native huts. The reed-clad banks continued to recede and the expanse of water broadened until it was evident that we were approaching a lake of considerable size. It was a large lake indeed, known as the Tonlé-Sap, or Great Lake, a freshwater sea of one hundred and thirty miles in length and forty in breadth, which, in spite of its immensity, vanishes almost completely during the five or six months of drought. Our course lay along the northern side, which was buried in a dense jungle. Its trees all seemed to be standing deep in the water, while here and there a little clump growing farther from the shore was covered as high as the topmost branches. No land was visible except in this one direction. Everywhere, south, east and west, as far as the eye could reach, the great inland sea extended to the horizon. Except for the swirl of a fish or the splash of some wild fowl not a ripple disturbed the placid surface. All around the vast expanse glistened like a mirror in the fierce sunshine. As the day advanced the heat grew intense, the northern breeze having died away. Nevertheless, it is not always calm on the Tonlé-Sap. Fierce tempests are by no means uncommon.

The captain and his *mécanicien* were an odd couple. They seemed to have nothing to do but to eat and sleep

or lounge in a deck-chair, reading a novel. The engineer, *bien ventru* as a matter of course, never paid a single visit to his engines and the captain scarcely ever went near the steering-wheel. The navigation of the ship, a simple matter no doubt in these unfrequented waters, was left to the natives.

All the afternoon the *Bassac* pursued its course through the Great Lake. A gorgeous sunset came and night fell, and there was still no sign that we were approaching our destination. At Phnom-Penh I had been informed that I should disembark at half-past five in the afternoon, but it was half-past nine before we came to anchor opposite a bright light about half a mile away on the starboard side, which, I was told, marked the entrance to the Siem-rep river. And Siem-rep is the little town close to Angkor. As soon as we had stopped the steamer was surrounded by sampans.

Climbing down into one of these ungainly boats I was rowed past the lighthouse into a narrow stream, whose banks were lined with trees and small villages. The night was pitch-dark and our progress was slow. Save for an oil lamp which glimmered occasionally from one of the huts on shore not a gleam of light was visible anywhere. It was lonely, too, for all my companions were natives, not a word of whose language I could understand. An hour had elapsed before we drew up alongside a landing-stage. A motor-car was awaiting us, sent from the Bungalow Hotel at Angkor, with a plump black man in charge who seemed a sort of courier, for he supervised the loading of all kinds of parcels and packages that we had brought from the steamer.

When it was laden with as much as it could hold the motor-car set off. Besides myself the only other passengers were the chauffeur and the courier.

Our speed was swift, and for many miles the road ran along a narrow embankment between a swamp and a river. Afterwards we plunged into a forest, where the darkness might almost be felt, but we passed by a native village

occasionally, whose dim lights helped to relieve the Cimmerian gloom. Presently, we were skirting the stream once more, and now and then the figure of a fisherman loomed forth, wading through the shallow water with a spear in one hand and a flaming torch in the other.

An hour's drive brought us to the little village of Siem-rep, where every one seemed to be asleep, and here there was a vexatious delay while the plump courier stopped at a dozen houses or more to distribute his parcels. But now we were almost at the journey's end. Ten minutes after leaving Siem-rep the chauffeur drew up with a jerk in front of a one-storey building that seemed to have many wings and annexes.

"Voilà le Bungalow," announced the black courier.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE *PARC* OF ANGKOR

THE phrase *Parc d'Angkor* is used by the French to describe the whole district that contains the ruins of the ancient city of Angkor, and it includes the remains of the city itself—known as Angkor-Thom—the great temple of Angkor-Vat and the various adjacent towers, temples and waterworks that belonged to the Khmer capital. They are some of the most wonderful relics of an ancient civilization in the whole world, surpassing even Borobudur in Java and the great monuments of India. Egypt alone can show anything of the kind that is comparable.

Although the existence of these ruins has been known for many generations it was not until the year 1858 that they were visited by a European explorer, one Henri Mouhot, a Frenchman. He found most of them hidden beneath the trees in the midst of a vast jungle, obliterated by the tentacles of the tropical vegetation, for the place had been deserted by man since the great Khmer empire was overthrown by its enemies six hundred years previously. It is providential that the custody of these monuments has fallen to the French, who are always so much more considerate than ourselves in their care of ancient buildings. Money that we should have squandered in over-educating the aborigines was used by the rulers of Indo-China to rescue the stones of Angkor from further destruction. In 1908, soon after this part of Cambodia came into possession of France by a treaty with Siam, the work of clearing away the trees was commenced under the supervision of experts. Fortunately, some of the most beautiful

of the temples were found to be in an excellent state of preservation.

Opposite to the Bungalow Hotel stands the most wonderful of them all, the temple or monastery of Angkor-Vat. One comes upon it immediately. Having passed through the little flower-garden of the hotel we cross a road, and, traversing a stretch of grass-land, lined with trees, we arrive on the verge of an expanse of water. The surface is overspread with reeds and water-lilies and around its shores there are always little groups of natives bathing. It is the moat that surrounds the sacred temple, the largest moat except one in the world, more than two hundred yards in breadth and more than three miles in circumference, its outer edge being faced with solid masonry. Looking across it we behold the outer façade of Angkor-Vat, bordering the water's edge for two hundred and fifty yards, crowned by three broken towers.

To give access to this façade a stone causeway, thirty-six feet in width, spans the moat in the centre of its western reach. It is approached by a flight of steps and is protected on either flank by a stone coping, ornamented here and there by the fan-shaped crest of Naga, the sacred cobra. Traversing this causeway, we arrive at the main entrance. The greater portion of the outer façade consists of a range of cloisters with a tiled roof, supported by slender columns, but it becomes a more massive erection in its central part, where it is surmounted by three broken towers, one of which rises above the entrance. Here, the causeway terminates in a wide stairway, leading up to a lofty portico. In spite of its delicate beauty an aspect of melancholy seems to rest upon the venerable frontage, enhanced by its sombre colouring, its mysterious cloisters, and the ruin of its graceful towers.

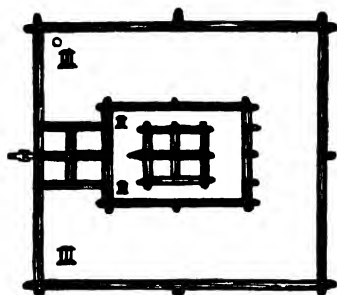
Mounting the steps and entering the porch, one passes into a high vaulted hall with the long piazzas branching off to right and left into the far distance. In front there is another portico with a flight of steps, leading down into the open air. One descends into a spacious meadow with

green grass and stately palms, a park-like meadow more than half a mile in width, enclosed by the moat on every side. But it is impossible to trace the course of the moat now, for all along its circumference it is veiled by a thick border of trees.

A continuation of the causeway appears to traverse the centre of the meadow, for its surface is paved with the same blocks of sandstone and it has a similar coping, from which the hooded crest of many-headed Naga rears itself repeatedly. On either side close at hand two small buildings—known as “libraries”—with stone-barred windows and a portico of crumbling columns, stand high above the ground upon creeper-clad pediments. A little farther on to the right and to the left two shallow lakes come into view, where a few priests are always taking their morning bath, fully dressed in their yellow robes. The smooth grass-land stretches in an unbroken expanse as far as the belt of verdure that fringes the moat. Numbers of oxen are grazing contentedly, and the tall palm trees nod their tufts of fan-shaped leaves in the light north wind.

In the far distance, five hundred yards away at the end of the paved road, another long façade is silhouetted against the blue sky, a more imposing façade than the first, for it rests upon an elevated terrace and five lofty towers uplift themselves overhead. They are curious towers, shaped as though a pile of tambours—each smaller than that below—were placed one above the other, with a cone on top of them, forming a tapering cupola. At the base of the façade a cloister-like piazza extends for a hundred yards on either side of the central porch, a similar piazza to that which borders the moat, with slender columns and a sloping roof. The whole frontage forms one side of a quadrangle, more than half a mile around, enclosing the first courtyard of the temple and standing nearly five yards above the surface of the park. A broad staircase leads from the causeway to the terrace upon which the long façade lies, and that part of the terrace below the main portico is cruciform in shape and wider and broader than the rest.

Eager to reach the inner sanctuary of the great temple, most of those who are paying their first visit will pass through the chambers and passages within the main porch, disregarding also the cloisters on either side ; and, ascending another flight of steps, will penetrate into the second courtyard, which is raised nine yards higher than the first. It is enclosed by a quadrangle, measuring fifteen hundred feet in circumference, similar to the outer one that abuts on to the park. In the middle of this quadrangle stands the *massif central* of Angkor-Vat, a huge pile of sandstone, surmounted by the sanctuary itself, a graceful building



GROUND PLAN OF ANGKOR-VAT.

with innumerable porticoes and fretted window-frames, resting on a broad platform and crowned by five great towers. The pinnacle of the central tower, which rises above the shrine of the god, is two hundred feet high.

The ascent of the great flight of stairs leading up to the platform is a toilsome task, for the steps are steep and narrow and slippery, but the view will compensate for the fatigue. It is obvious at a glance that the temple of Angkor-Vat is constructed in a series of quadrangles—the eastern and western sides of which are longer than those to the north and south—and that these form three courtyards one within the other, rising pyramid fashion, the interior higher than that immediately without. The whole is



enclosed by the distant moat, forming an enciente of 5500 metres in circumference. Looking down from the lofty platform surrounding the sanctuary, the eye is bewildered by a stupendous vista of interminable stonework, a labyrinth-like panorama of gnarled roof-tops and carved gables, of towering domes and massive stairways. One can walk around the terrace and view the scene from all points of the compass. Some of the courtyards below are littered by fragments that have fallen from the walls. Another contains two temple-like edifices, flanked with rounded columns. A third, which no doubt was covered by a wooden roof, now reveals only the square grey pillars that used to support it. And beyond the outskirts of the moat, as far as the eye can reach, the jungle stretches in every direction, an illimitable expanse of clustering tree-tops.

Walking from the terrace into the temple of the sanctuary one traverses a maze of vaulted galleries communicating with each other, but the span of the ceilings is always narrow since the Khmer architects did not understand the construction of an arch. The shrine is in the centre of the pile, a small high chamber, approached by four rectangular corridors. Some believe that it was built originally in honour of the god Vishnu ; others allege that it was dedicated to the cruel Çiva. At present the room contains a figure of Buddha. All the halls and galleries of this part of the temple, like those in the quadrangles below, are covered with mural decorations.

Superb though the architecture of Angkor-Vat may be, its carvings and bas-reliefs are its chief glory. Other great buildings have been conceived on as noble a plan, but the stones of none are graven with more beauty and distinction. Each of its countless doorways is spanned by an ornamental entablature. The cornices that stretch for miles along the summit of its walls, in the interior as well as the exterior, display an endless variety of ingenious tracery. All the capitals that crown its thousands of pillars reveal a wealth of intricate chiselling. There are friezes cut so deftly in the stone that the engraved surface

appears like a piece of stamped velvet. Pediments, lintels, window-frames and columns bear testimony everywhere to the artistry of the old Khmer craftsmen.

But most splendid of all the sculptures are the bas-reliefs, which chronicle the history of the people or glorify the might and majesty of their gods. Thousands of yards of these carvings are spread over the walls and tell the life-story of the ancient Khmers as vividly as the printed page. We are shown the deities whom they worshipped and the kings whom they obeyed. We witness their battles with human enemies and watch their fights against the wild beast. Their sports and pastimes and manners and customs are depicted on every stone. Both of the two great quadrangles are surrounded by a mile or more of cloisters, and an uninterrupted series of tableaux cover the length of their walls.

A whole day is insufficient to form a conception even of the ground-plan of Angkor-Vat. Courtyard opens into courtyard, corridor intersects corridor, stairways lead up and down to terrace and quadrangle. It is long before the contour of the temple is fixed in the mind. One returns to it again and again after visiting the other vestiges of the Khmers of Angkor, for it is the most sublime and beautiful of their constructions and is the least dilapidated of them all. If expedient, it would be an easy matter to restore Angkor-Vat to its original condition.

Undoubtedly, the famous temple owes much of its sublimity to its environment. The vast piles of Luxor and Karnac fill the mind with a sense of awe and reverence, but their situation is so arid and austere that, *unlike* the lovely temple—with its waving palms and water-lapped terraces—that used to adorn the island of Philæ, they give no impression of charm. Similarly, the cathedrals of England, set amongst smooth lawns and abundant foliage, have a far more enchanting aspect than those of France. The beauty of Angkor-Vat is enhanced by the trees and water that encompass its walls.

Perhaps, however, the temple is most sublime, like

many other great works of architecture, on a moonlight night. And a serene moonlit night in the tropics, when no clouds obscure the glitter of the stars, cannot be matched by any other clime. The clear white radiance steals through the deep corridors and the long-drawn cloisters, flecking the shining pavement as far as the eye can see with the jet-black shadows of a hundred pillars. Above every open courtyard a line of rugged gables and flanged towers are outlined darkly against the sky, while below, scores of stately columns, enclosing some fair piazza, gleam in reflection to the soft moonbeams. The countless statues of Buddha and other deities, reared against the wall along the halls and passages, have an almost human resemblance amidst the deceptive chiaroscuro.

A time of nearly equal charm is the close of day, when the shadows of the grey buildings are deepening over the grass-lands within the moat and the setting sun is sinking behind the roofs and pinnacles of the western façade. The tufted palms are reflected in the surface of the lakes and the summits of the great temple are tinged with a crimson glow. Grave and contemplative, the visitor walks down the long paved road through the meadow; and, traversing the stairways and portico of the outer façade, takes his stand upon the causeway that crosses the moat to gaze for a while upon the distant towers as they fade away into darkness. At such an hour a weird sight may be seen. By the side of a high gable, from some small aperture above the cornice, a flock of bats comes pouring forth into the warm still air, myriads upon myriads, so compact that in the twilight they look like a cloud of smoke.

The most alluring spectacle that the *parc* of Angkor has to show, after the temple of Angkor-Vat, is the ruined city of Angkor-Thom, the capital of the kingdom of the Khmers. It is situated to the north of Angkor-Vat, about a thousand metres separating the two enceintes, and is surrounded on all sides by primeval forest. The drive thither from the Bungalow Hotel passes through the jungle nearly all the way, and in the early morning there is

plenty of bird life and animal life to be seen amidst the trees. A small herd of monkeys often crosses the road or a glimpse may be caught of others now and then as they swing from branch to branch with incredible swiftmess. Occasionally a great toucan sails overhead, with gigantic beak and immense span of wings, looking as large as a vulture. On the shores of nearly every pool a snow-white heron is to be found, stalking with solemn strides through the shallow water; and usually one of the big kingfishers may be seen here also, sitting patiently on a stump or darting away in startled flight between the reeds and rushes. Clouds of blue and yellow butterflies flutter in the air.

Angkor-Thom is protected by an even greater moat than Angkor-Vat, inside of which there runs a stone rampart. The moat and walls form an exact square, each side being two miles in length or eight miles in circumference. Within this area lay the city—with its temples and palaces, the mansions of the nobles and the huts of the common people—a vast community when at the summit of its glory. The moat is more than a hundred yards in width and the walls were seven yards high and more than thirty-six feet in thickness. They are in a state of dilapidation now, fallen and crumbling in many places, and are buried beneath a rich overgrowth of vegetation.

The jungle indeed seems to stifle everything. It has enclosed the causeway that spans the moat with a screen of branches on either side, a twisted, tangled network of foliage through which the eye cannot penetrate. The luxuriant avenue borders the road up to the main gate of the city, whose crumbling portico is shrouded by immense trees and patched with clusters of shrubs and bushes. It is a colossal gateway with a high narrow entrance, overtopped by a soaring tower. Far up amidst the stones the mammoth face of some Brahmanic deity is sculptured, the smiling, inscrutable features perhaps of the god Çiva. Passing through the gateway one enters the ancient city. Here, there are trees still, trees everywhere, an irrepressible



ANGKOR WAT



BAYON, ANGKOR THOM



forest, occupying the whole of the wide area encompassed by the four walls. No vestige of human habitation remains, though once the capital contained a population of many hundred thousand souls.

The road passes through the city in a straight line from north to south; and in the middle—one mile from the entrance—it is intersected by another straight road, running from east to west, both of which always have existed in their present position, cutting Angkor-Vat into four equal sections. Here, in the exact centre of the city, where the four roads converge, there is a clear space amidst the jungle and here is situated the ruined temple of Bayon, one of the earliest of the great monuments fashioned by the Khmers.

It is a gigantic pile of masonry, built in three stages one above the other, forming three platforms; but the vandalism of mankind, the ravages of time, and the stifling embraces of the forest have wrought havoc with the massive stonework. There are gaps and fissures everywhere. Crumbling colonnades and fallen columns are strewn along the terraces, and the stairways are broken and distorted. Over the whole fabric shrubs and bushes grow in all directions and a tangle of creepers has spread to the topmost heights. Like every ruined sanctuary it is a sad and awe-inspiring sight, a melancholy scene of dissolution and decay.

The mammoth towers that crown the structure intensify the atmosphere of terror and mystery that seems to environ it. There are fifty of these towers, grouped upon the high terraces, tall tottering masses of rugged stones scarred with ruts and crevices; and upon each, high up near the summit, a colossal face is graven, a face that wears a cruel, malevolent smile, the countenance no doubt of the implacable god, Çiva. Four replicas of the grinning mask flank every tower, a face upon each of the four sides, so that it is impossible, wherever one stands, to escape the gaze of the terrible deity. Once he smiled upon a city of a million people and could survey a network

of busy streets and human habitations. Now, there is nothing but jungle for him to behold within the city walls and the four lonely roads that lead from his temple to the distant gateways.

The temple of Bayon, like that of Angkor-Vat, is a labyrinth of courtyards and corridors, with vaulted chambers and dark passages, on each of its terraces. Its walls, too, like those of Angkor-Vat are incrustated with bas-reliefs, less fanciful and more robustly wrought than those of the later temple, but revealing even more completely the mode of life of the ancient Khmer people. It was completed when their civilization was still young, more than a thousand years ago, before their art had reached perfection. Only a slight conception of its immense proportions can be afforded by the measuring tape. The circumference of its base measures more than five hundred yards and the encircling platforms are graduated in pyramid fashion, the topmost tower rising a hundred and fifty feet above the ground.

Save for a smaller temple and a few isolated pieces of statuary, only one other vestige of the great city of Angkor-Thom has escaped destruction—the precincts that used to surround the palace of the king. The most conspicuous of these is the wall of the so-called Terrace of Honour, the entire surface of which is decorated with carvings in high relief, requiring as much laborious study as the bas-reliefs of Bayon in order to comprehend their significance. It is nearly four hundred yards in length, broken by five broad staircases, and is surmounted by a low parapet, adorned with statues of lions and the many-headed Naga. In height it varies from a few feet to several yards and the sculpture shows infinite diversity—birds and beasts and human figures succeeding each other in long processions. In one place there is a frieze of life-sized elephants.

On the terrace above, the forest has been cleared away and there is smooth grass-land in place of thick undergrowth, but many stately trees remain to cast cool shadows upon the ruins below. Only a few broken stones can be seen of Phimean-Akas, the residence of the Kings of Angkor,



which stood in the centre of the enclosure within the terraces. There are the crumbling walls of the courtyard, a few roofless columns, some fragments of steps and gateways. All else belonging to the royal palace has disappeared, ravaged in the first place by victorious enemies, and afterwards crushed out of existence by the resistless jungle. The palace of Angkor-Thom, unlike its temples, was not built of stone; and, although magnificent to look upon, probably it was as unsubstantial as the modern palace at Phnom-Penh.

It is well to leave Angkor-Thom by the western gate—"the Gate of Victory"—for on the causeway that spans the moat a curious specimen may be seen of the statuary of the old Khmers. The tropical vegetation encloses the road thickly on either side, but along its southern border there is a parapet, or coping-stone, formed by the long-stretched body of a monstrous Naga. Its seven heads, hooded and erect, guard the entrance to the city, and more than fifty colossal figures squat on the ground, one behind the other, supporting the lengthy coils of the great serpent in their hands. It is a weird, barbarous conception, one of the devices of the priesthood, no doubt, to strike terror into the hearts of the common folk.

There are many other temples scattered through the *parc* of Angkor, showing that a large population used to dwell outside the walls of the city. The largest of these is Prah-Khan, a stupendous mass of stonework buried in the deep jungle, not much smaller in size than Angkor-Vat itself and older even than the Bayon. No attempt has been made to clear away the forest, and the temple is engulfed in the growth of more than six hundred years. Its moat and ramparts measured two miles in circumference, but the moat has been choked by the timber and foliage of centuries and much of the wall is broken down. It is a beautiful ruin, rendered more beautiful by its environment. The soft light that flickers through the trees casts green and golden shadows upon the grey stones. Moss and lichen

and flowery creepers have spread their many-coloured embroideries over the carved lintels and graceful archways. Leafy bushes nod and rustle from the crevices of tall towers. All around there is the solitude of the primeval jungle.

Within a few miles' radius of Angkor-Thom a dozen or more temples exist in various states of preservation. Two of the largest are named Ta-Prohm and Bateai-Kedci, huge architectural structures with a wealth of wonderful carvings, but encompassed by the tropical foliage as irreparably as Prah-Khan. The little shrine, too, of Neak-Peau is completely enveloped by the spreading roots of an immense fig tree, which clasp it on all sides in sinuous folds. In like manner a gigantic trunk, towering fifty feet above the ground, is resting upon the gateway of the temple of Ta-Som. But, although so much ruin has been wrought by the ravages of nature upon Angkor-Thom and its monuments, the first and greatest destruction by far was accomplished by the hand of man when the kingdom of the Khmers fell before the onslaughts of its enemies six centuries ago.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE KHMERS OF ANGKOR

OUR knowledge of the origin of the great Khmer people is still indefinite and incomplete. Historians have not yet ascertained the precise locality of the cradle of their birth nor expressed a final opinion with regard to their ethnology. It is most probable that they were a combination of races and that ancient Cambodia, like ancient Britain, was subjected at different periods to the invasions of various tribes. Unquestionably, they owe part of their ancestry to a virile northern race, while it is certain that the genesis of some of their forbears occurred in southern India. Certain characteristics suggest an admixture of the Javanese Malays. Possibly, also, Mongolian blood ran in their veins.

Like most savage people they invented a mythological lineage for themselves. According to this legend their progenitor was a pilgrim named Kambu, who espoused the daughter of Naga, the seven-headed cobra—a benevolent deity and a friend of mankind—and thus Naga remained throughout the ages the ancestor as well as the patron-saint of the whole race. It is from its first ruler that the nation derived its name, for the country was called Kambujas (afterwards Cambodge), the region of the sons of Kambu. Tradition alleged that these grandchildren of Naga were of superhuman wisdom and strength; and, since it is from their works that they must be judged, it is manifest that they became a great people.

Many hundreds of years elapsed, however, before the numerous tribes of Cambodia ceased to fight amongst themselves and the country had been welded into one

kingdom. It was not until the dawn of the seventh century that the whole Khmer people gave allegiance to a single monarch ; the eighth century was drawing to a close when at last the reigning king had become strong enough to found a great capital. The name of this ruler was Yaco-Varman, who built the city of Angkor-Thom about A.D. 900. Henceforward the wealth and might of the Khmers continued to increase up to the beginning of the fourteenth century, the approximate date of their decline and fall. The temple of Angkor-Vat, completed about 1140 by King Surya-Varman, was the last and most magnificent of their buildings. In all, the Khmer empire endured for six hundred years, but only during one-half of that period was it a great power.

There is no doubt that the early inhabitants of Cambodia were a remarkable race. Upon the mural decorations they are depicted as strong, dauntless, athletic men, and written evidence gives a similar account of them. Their achievements show that they were excelled by no other contemporary nation. At the height of its splendour their kingdom could bid defiance to the rest of Asia. No country in the world that flourished in the same era can boast of monuments comparable to those of Angkor. Brought into existence by the mingling of many races, they owe their superlative qualities to a mixed ancestry.

The site of their capital was well chosen. Only twenty miles away from great quarries, where there was an abundance of sandstone and limonite, they were assured of an unlimited supply of building material. Close at hand and teeming with fish was the Great Lake, not only providing food enough to feed the population, but yielding a surplus that could be dried and exported—the nucleus of a large revenue. For hundreds of miles around the city walls stretched the most fertile rice-fields in southern Asia, producing sufficient crops for home consumption as well as for a considerable foreign trade. And the vast inland sea that almost lapped the walls of Angkor-Thom overflowed into the great waterway of the Mekong, which

brought the Khmers into direct communication with the outer world.

The city must have presented a wonderful spectacle when at the summit of its glory. Nowhere else could be seen a moat of eight miles in circumference and a hundred yards in breadth. Its waters were swarming with enormous crocodiles, monsters of thirty feet in length, put there so that no invading army should be able to get across. Although the ramparts inside the moat were not more than seven yards in height, the tops of the walls were wide enough to allow three chariots to run abreast, and sloping banks within, leading from the ground to the battlements, made it easy for both horsemen and charioteers to concentrate at any position. All of the five great gateways are said to have had a terrific appearance, with their effigies of the implacable Çiva and the colossal balustrades of Naga and his attendant demons, which bordered every one of the bridges over the moat.

Beyond each gateway, always guarded by a multitude of soldiers, a long broad road swept across the city in a straight line, passing through a community of wooden huts, built of bamboos and thatched with palm-leaves, similar to the abodes of the natives at the present time. No dog was permitted within the walls, the people having a severe regard for cleanliness. Farther on, nearer to the central square, stood the houses of the nobles, constructed of clay and covered with tiles or sheets of lead, for a water-tight roof is the first necessity of life in a tropical country. There was no lack of domestic servants, who were recruited from slaves taken in battle or captured from savage tribes, but none of these were allowed to appear in the public streets. Some of the nobility possessed a hundred or more. Even the lower orders were able to afford to have a few.

The temple of Bayon that stood in the square, marking the centre of the city where the cross-roads meet, was adorned with a gilded tower, while the small temple of Baphuon close at hand had a gleaming copper spire, which

was the tallest pinnacle in the city. Ranged along the interminable Terraces of Honour were wide verandas and covered corridors, surrounding the outer courtyard of the palace. The Hall of Council, adjoining the royal apartments, had golden window frames and an array of mirrors, supported upon columns, to enhance the glare and glitter of its painted walls. Beyond were the precincts of the palace and the residence of the king, forbidden to all but the highest officials and regarded with the utmost sanctity.

An ambassador from China, named Tcheou-Ta-Kouan, who visited Angkor in the year A.D. 1296, has left a description of a royal reception at the palace :

“Twice a day the king gives an audience to discuss affairs of state. There is no settled order of precedence. The nobles and plebeians who desire to speak with their ruler sit down and wait for him. Presently, distant music is heard within the palace and the guards outside blow their conches as a welcome to the king. I am told that he is borne on a golden palanquin and has not far to come from his apartments. A moment later two girls of the palace draw up a curtain with their slender fingers and the monarch, bearing the Sacred Sword in his hand, appears at the golden window. The nobles and plebeians join their hands and touch the soil with their brows. When the noise of the conches has ceased they may lift up their heads again. If the king permits they come and sit nearer to him. The seats are lions’ skins, which are regarded as tokens of royalty. When the business is over the king turns round ; the two girls of the palace drop the curtain, every one rises to his feet.”

The monarch of the Khmers was regarded as a super-human person by his subjects and venerated almost as a god. There are hundreds of pictures of him in bas-relief, showing him as a gigantic figure always, excelling all other men in stature and strength. Sometimes, he is shown in the act of slaying some wild beast without a weapon. He breaks the spine of a lion by twining his leg around its

body and bending back its head with his right arm. He strangles an immense serpent with his bare hands. He is even unarmed when he attacks an elephant, which he seizes by the leg and batters to death with his fist. In warfare he is represented as a Herculean creature, defeating scores of enemies unaided.

In times of peace he is the same dominating puissant person. He reviews his troops beneath an umbrella, like the late Duke of Cambridge, or takes part in some state ceremonial, riding in a chariot or sitting on an elephant. We see him surrounded by his wives and concubines who were numbered in their thousands. Usually, he is dressed in light attire, suited to the climate, but he wears a richly-chased mukuta on his head and much jewellery. Often he is seated on a throne, giving laws to his subjects. Bas-reliefs on every wall reveal him in a different aspect.

Tcheou-Ta-Kouan, the ambassador, tells us of the splendour of a royal procession :

"When the prince goes out the cavalry rides in front as an escort ; then follow the flags, the pennons and the music. Between three and five hundred girls of the palace in embroidered robes with flowers in their hair, hold tall candles in their hands and form a troop ; even in full daylight these candles are lit. Next follow more girls of the palace, carrying gold and silver utensils belonging to the king and a number of ornaments of all shapes and sizes. After these march other girls, holding lances and shields, who are the private guard of the prince ; these also form a troop. Then come the bullock-carts and the horse-chariots, all decorated with gold. The ministers and nobles are mounted on elephants and ride in front to reconnoitre ; their red parasols are innumerable. After these the wives and concubines of the king are carried in palanquins, in carriages, or on elephants. Certainly they have more than a hundred gold parasols. Behind them there is the prince himself, mounted on an elephant, and holding in his hand the Sacred Sword. The tusks of the

elephant are adorned with gold. He has more than twenty white parasols decorated with gold and with gold handles. Numerous elephants surround him and the cavalry protect him."

The religion of the ancient Khmers in the first place was Brahmanic, the harsh uncompromising creed that had come to them from India. Its theology is based upon a Trimûrti, or Trinity of gods—Brahmâ, Vishnu and Çiva.

"Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,  
Whose attributes were Rage, Revenge and Lust."

The first of these, who is usually represented with four arms and four heads, was believed to be the Creator of the world, but in the progress of ages he became a doge-like divinity, whose functions were assumed by the other two. Vishnu, who also possessed four arms, was regarded as the Preserver of the world, and he was supposed to visit the earth in periodical *avatars*, or incarnations, to relieve the distresses of humanity. The last of the Trinity was Çiva, Çiva of the blue-throat and the necklace of skulls, the savage, merciless destroyer, who was held responsible for every evil that inflicts mankind—flood, famine, pestilence, storm, earthquake and death all being attributed to him. There were other lesser deities in the pantheon of Brahmanism, as well as fairy-like immortals such as the Apsaras and the Tevadas, and demoniacal monsters such as the Devas and the Garudas.

Naturally, the walls of the temples give far more representations of the exploits of the gods than even those of the king. One of the pictures contains the chief divinities of the Brahmanic Olympia. Brahmâ himself sits astride his golden goose; Vishnu is mounted on the demon eagle, Garouda; the truculent Çiva may be recognized by his towering head-dress. Kubera, the god of wealth, is borne on the back of a soldier, and Skanda, the god of war, is riding on his peacock. A fierce battle is taking place and the deities are intermingled with a host of mythological



creatures, Devas and Asouras, who are slaughtering one another with spears and arrows.

In spite of the contention between Vishnu and Çiva, since the former was the saviour and the latter the enemy of mankind, the two gods apparently had a mutual respect for each other. One of the most familiar of the bas-reliefs reveals them in amicable negotiation with regard to the fate of the giant Bâna, who was Çiva's ally and the foe of Vishnu. As usual Çiva is enthroned on a mountain, while Vishnu, in the form of Krishna—one of his incarnations—is presenting propitiatory offerings. "Saviour of the world," says Çiva, "I know that you are the Supreme Being. In the entire universe no one can overcome you. Then pray be merciful. I have promised my protection to Bâna. Let not my word be given in vain." To which Vishnu replies, "Then he shall live! Since you have promised him his life I withhold my vengeance. For we two are not distinct the one from the other; what you are, I am also."

Vishnu also is the hero of the most famous perhaps of all the tableaux of Angkor-Vat, the Churning of the Sea of Milk. According to this legend the Devas and the Asouras believed that they had discovered a means of achieving immortality. Wrapping a huge snake around a mountain they endeavoured by this method to churn the water. Twice Vishnu came to their aid. In the first place he saved their lives when the serpent began to vomit poison. Secondly, he assumed the shape of a tortoise, and, diving into the sea, prevented the mountain from sinking into unfathomable depths. Thus, his allies were able to proceed with their churning and became immortal at last.

In the Brahmanic mythology there was a god of love, whose name was Kâma. But his fate was a sad one. Finding Çiva enthroned upon a mountain, in an ecstasy of ascetic abandonment and engaged in teaching his disciples, the mischievous Kâma launched one of his arrows against the Destroyer. The shot was harmless enough, for the

bow was made of sugar-cane, the cord was a string of honey and the arrow merely a spray of flowers. However, the savage Çiva was enraged at being disturbed in his meditations, and flashing a furious eye upon the god of love he shrivelled him to ashes.

One of the galleries of Angkor-Vat displays a tableau of Heaven and Hell, depicting the state of existence in the two places side by side. But the old Khmer artists do not show much fertility of imagination in their idea of Paradise. Apparently, they believed that a seat under a parasol and a dish of fruit are the sole joys that it has to offer. The nether world, however, promises an existence of more variety. According to the picture, its denizens are suffering the most amazing tortures. They are bound by ropes or loaded with chains and flogged unmercifully. Crowds of demons attack them with javelins and shoot at them with arrows. Dogs bite them, stags pierce them with their horns, elephants stamp upon them, lions tear them to pieces. Men and women are writhing in agony. There is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth everywhere.

Of all the minor divinities portrayed on the walls of Angkor, the most dainty and fanciful are the Apsaras and the Tevadas. The first of these is sculptured in miniature a thousand times, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups of three, enclosed always in a delicate *encadrement*, graven exquisitely on the stone. It is the figure of a female dancer, who is dancing in the lightest of attire, for she wears nothing but a necklace and anklets with a narrow girdle around her waist. It looks as though she is bending her shapely body to the lilt of music, and her rounded limbs and twinkling feet seem to whirl to and fro in joyous abandonment. The Tevadas, on the contrary, are always in repose, but their garments are no less scanty and they display also a bare bust. Like the Apsaras they are crowned with an ornate mukuta and one of their arms is always raised with a lotus leaf in the hand. The Tevadas are the divine wives of the gods.

The ancient Khmers were essentially a martial race.

Of the thousands of yards of bas-reliefs that cover the walls of their temples, the greater portion delineates Homeric combats or shows long processions of warriors marching to battle. It is easy to form a just idea of the army as a fighting force. The sturdy foot-soldiers carried spears and javelins and were provided with shields. The cavalry, mounted on fine chargers and riding without stirrups, seem to have been lancers for the most part. There was a great array of charioteers, usually armed with bows and arrows. War engines for siege purposes accompanied the infantry. And most formidable of all were the elephants, trained beasts that rejoiced in battle, striding along with waving trunks and uplifted tusks, bearing in their howdahs some illustrious chieftain.

They were sailors, too, as well as soldiers, these old Khmers, being unable to disregard sea-power, since their kingdom embraced the Great Lake and was intersected by the river Mekong. In the earliest part of their history they must have had to fight many fierce naval battles. Most of their warships were huge galleys, propelled by a single row of oarsmen, no doubt slaves, with an uninterrupted deck-space completely occupied by spearmen and archers; but there were others for the use of the chieftains with sumptuous cabins. When an enemy vessel was encountered the tactics seem always to have been the same, the two ships being interlocked while one crew tried to board the other. The victors hurled the vanquished into the waves.

After the kingdom was firmly established, peace reigned over the Great Lake and pleasure boats became more numerous than war-galleys. The Khmer people seem to have been fond of making an excursion on the water. It was the custom for the wives of the princes and nobles to be taken for a row in a sort of gondola, manned by a couple of oarsmen, one in the stern and the other at the prow. The king, also, often went for a cruise in his state barge, seated beneath an awning and attended by a procession of boats, some of which were filled by his women-

folk and others contained a band of music or a company of dancing-girls. Naturally, there were numbers of fishing-craft, since fishing was a prosperous industry, and the bas-reliefs show how the boatmen went to work. A sentinel, perched upon a "look-out" on shore, indicated the position of the shoals, just as it is done in the pilchard fishery on the south-west coast of England at the present time. Casting-nets were in use, also a kind of trawl, and the catch was thrust into panniers to prevent escape. It is easy to recognize the species of many of the fish, as they are found in the Tonlé-Sap to-day. Evidently the crocodile was a formidable enemy of the fisherman, for it both robbed him of his prey and did infinite damage to his nets.

Although their capital was so close to the shores of the Great Lake, the citizens of Angkor took care to have a plentiful water-supply just outside the city walls. The two largest of these waterworks still exist—the East and the West Baray reservoirs, five miles in length, similar to the great tanks constructed by the ancient inhabitants of Ceylon. Like the moats of Angkor-Thom and Angkor-Vat these Barays were fed by the Siem-rep river, which flows into the Tonlé-Sap hard by. Possibly they were used also as a storage for fish during the rainy season when the Mekong had become unnavigable and the Great Lake was in flood.

In spite of their innate cruelty and the austereness of their religion the mass of the Khmer people seem to have lived a not unjoyful existence. Since they belonged to a ruling race the plebeians were entitled to privileges as well as the nobles; and, although dominated by an absolute monarch, there is evidence of a spirit of democracy amongst them. Old Tcheou-Ta-Kouan of China has recorded, as we have seen, that even the lower orders possessed servants and the common man had as good a right as the aristocrat to audience with the king. No doubt, their brutality was expended upon their slaves and their enemies.

The pictures on the walls demonstrate clearly that most of the menfolk were soldiers, strong, well-nourished,

and jocund creatures with a keen zest for life. Evidently, public games in the manner of the old Greeks and Romans were a favourite amusement. Savage animals of all sorts were opposed to one another. Men fought with wild boars and tigers, and there were boxing contests with naked fists. Cock-fighting was a popular sport, and there were exhibitions by wrestlers and acrobats and jugglers. Polo, too, seems to have been played by the cavalry. Bands of music performed frequently, well-equipped bands with trumpets, cymbals and tom-toms. Dancing-girls, of course, were to be seen everywhere. The empire of the Khmers needed all the warriors it could muster for national defence, so it was necessary to keep the population in sound health and good spirits.

In times of peace, no doubt, the soldiers worked on the land, and that labour was held in honour is indicated by the pictures of the rice-fields in the temples. Upon the same walls we behold the workers at dinner when their toil was over, and we learn also how their food was cooked for them. In another panel the mothers are nursing their babies and little boys and girls are playing together happily. One picture shows a father carrying two of his children on his shoulders while he leads another by the hand. All the available evidence goes to prove that the common people were cared for and prosperous.

One of the chief pastimes was hunting, for the jungle abounded in game of all kinds, the numbers of which had to be restricted. The elephant was trained to play an essential part in the chase and seems to have been able to track down and slay every species of savage animal. He had not the least fear of the tiger and the terrible wild bull was no match for him. He could tear even a rhinoceros to pieces. But, although the elephant was such a powerful auxiliary, the huntsmen were capable of dealing with the fiercest beast of the forest. They were accustomed to meet the tiger in single combat, armed only with a lance, and invariably pierced the creature to the heart. Being skilful archers, they could pursue the buffalo and the wild

boar with their bows and arrows ; and, if we are to believe the evidence of the bas-reliefs, they could kill either of these creatures with a club.

Dress was of no great importance in a climate such as Angkor, but the Khmers seem to have held jewellery in high esteem. The only person who was not clad in the lightest of raiment was the unfortunate king when obliged to appear in the embroidered robes of state. Every one wore the chignon, as many of the natives do still, but the soldiers always went into battle with a shaven head. The attire of both men and women was merely a thin sârong, or skirt, with no clothing at all on the upper part of their bodies. Evidently, the higher-class woman spent much time at her toilet and was fond of using ointment and perfumes. It would seem that she was a luxury-loving person with all the self-indulgence and lethargy of the ancient world.

No doubt it was luxury that was responsible for the downfall of the great empire. It is evident from the testimony of Tcheou-Ta-Kouan of China that the wealth and splendour of the city of Angkor was unequalled by any other kingdom in western Asia ; and the renown of its riches must have inflamed the cupidity of the warlike nations which surrounded it on every side. While these were waxing in strength through an intense struggle for existence the Khmers became enervated and unwarlike owing to a prolonged period of peace and the ease and comfort of a sybarite life. The employment of innumerable slaves tended to undermine their character, both physically and morally. So, at last, when the time came for them to fight for their hearths and homes they met with nothing but defeat, and gradually their armies were annihilated by the enemy. Their country was ravaged by fire and sword ; the inhabitants were exterminated and enslaved.

It is this catastrophe that brought the ruin that we see upon the city of Angkor-Thom and many of the temples belonging to it. The devastation cannot have been caused

by earthquake, which has never occurred in this region, or by the expansion of the forest alone. Undoubtedly the greatest havoc by far was wrought by the conquerors themselves, who had no reverence for the ancient religion of the Khmers or for the shrines built in its honour. Nevertheless, Angkor-Vat, although originally a Brahmanic temple dedicated to Vishnu, has escaped destruction almost entirely. Can it be that it was already devoted to Buddha in the fourteenth century when the armies of the Siamese and the Annamites descended upon it and in consequence was regarded as sacred ?

*The Downfall of the Gods*, by Sir Hugh Clifford, a story of the thirteenth century, gives a graphic picture of ancient Angkor. A description of the ruins as they exist to-day will be found in *Angkor the Magnificent*, by H. Churchill Candee. In recent years numerous volumes, both in French and English, have been written about Angkor.

## CHAPTER X

### DOWN THE MEKONG

NO one can desire a more comfortable dwelling-place than the Bungalow at Angkor—the only hotel in the East against which I have never heard the slightest hostile criticism. Considering that it is in the heart of the jungle, more than four hundred miles by road from Saigon, the organization and equipment of the little hostelry are wonderful.

A one-storey building with a veranda—as its name signifies—it is constructed in the form of a quadrangle, most of its forty bedrooms looking out upon the grass courtyard. All the doors and windows are protected by a gauze screen, and every guest has a private bathroom and lavatory with running water. The head “boy” is an Annamite, as brisk and cleanly in his methods as any Chinaman, which is the highest praise that can be bestowed. And the cuisine is excellent, for the manager and his Provençal wife are *restaurateurs* who take pride in their work. One of the most delicious of their *plats*, *Risotto de Volaille*—in which slices of chicken are served in a creamy cheese sauce with a thin brown crust of rice—is a speciality of the house that seems to be a novelty to most people.

The hotel boasts a small library containing a number of French novels, but there are only about half a dozen English books, Dr. Marie Stopes's *Married Love* being the most well-thumbed by far. There is also a Visitors' Book, filled with the lucubrations of tourists for a period of many years. Most of the entries have been written by Americans, who outnumber all other travellers. To many



of these compositions footnotes have been appended by subsequent visitors. Although trivial, some of them reveal many odd phases of human nature.

A certain Mr. L—— P—— of Norwood in Massachusetts, who was staying at Angkor in December 1916, has inscribed the following eulogy :

*Leaving December 10th with many regrets.  
A Most Genial Host.  
A Competent Guide.  
Have twice visited Greece and Egypt,  
But have never seen such magnificence.*

Beneath, other visitors have penned these ribald comments :

- (a) *Please don't get excited. Visit Greece and Egypt again. Say! Have you seen Niagara and the Woolworth Buildings, N.Y.?*
- (b) *The kind of American that Americans do not like.*
- (c) *Quite true.*
- (d) *Right again.*

An anonymous writer appears anxious about posterity :

*Well! We built the Woolworth Building 750 feet high, and the Brooklyn Bridge one and a half miles long, and New York has about 20 million people in and around.*

*We're not so bad. I wonder what we'll be like a thousand years from now?*

A cynical Frenchman and a churlish Englishman answer the question :

- (a) *Avec des queues peut-être.*
- (b) *Perhaps modest.*

Another light-hearted scribe bursts into poetry :

*Hail !  
The gavy's all here.  
What the deuce do we care—  
There's plenty liquor here.  
An American that does not believe in Prohibition.*

Another poem a little farther on makes a brave start, but terminates abruptly :

*"Here's to the girl who dresses in black,  
Who always looks neat and never looks slack,  
And who has such little . . ."*

There were two more lines originally, but some busybody has obliterated them.

It is difficult to tear oneself away from Angkor. In addition to its natural beauty and the interest of its antiquities the climate and the accommodation are so much superior to those of Saigon that there are many inducements to stay on indefinitely. The wise traveller will remain as long as he can spare time, and however long his visit lasts there will be something new to see every day.

It is necessary to leave the Bungalow before seven o'clock on the morning of departure in order to catch the steamer that is waiting on the Tonlé-Sap for passengers who are returning to Phnom-Penh. A heavy dew is sparkling on the grass and the air has a refreshing coolness as the car speeds away from the *parc* of Angkor towards the little hamlet of Siem-rep. It is a pretty village with a splashing river on one side of the road and the handsome villas of the French officials on the other. A broad lawn runs between the stream and the highway, and the houses are covered with purple bougainvillæa and stand in luxuriant gardens. Beyond Siem-rep is the jungle that looked so eerie at nighttime but has a civilized enough

appearance now with the countless huts that line the edge of the road and the innumerable plantations of banana trees. Leaving the forest behind, one traverses a long embankment, built high above the fields so that traffic may be uninterrupted during flood-time; and, at last, after a drive of twenty miles, the car reaches the landing-stage of the Siem-rep river. The rest of the journey, which occupies another hour, is accomplished as before by sampan.

It was nine o'clock when the heavy boat lumbered past the lighthouse at the mouth of the stream and entered the waters of the Tonlé-Sap. The great lake was shining like a sheet of glass beneath the fierce sunlight; not a ripple disturbed the smooth surface as far as the eye could see. Already it was getting very hot. About three-quarters of a mile from the mangrove-fringed shore the little *Bassac* was awaiting us; and when I got on board I found once more that I was the only passenger.

Just as the steamer was about to depart a sampan came alongside with a wounded native lying on a stretcher. His head was bound in a bloodstained cloth and he appeared half-unconscious. Full of sympathy, our captain rushed to the rails to give orders that the poor fellow should be carried on to the promenade deck, when a copper-coloured face looked up from the cabin of the sampan and a sergeant of militia began to babble forth a shrill explanation.

It appeared that the wounded man was a "brigand" of much notoriety, who had committed many audacious robberies. Finally, when tracked down a few days previously, he had murdered one of the pursuing *miliciens* in a desperate attempt to avoid capture. Now he was being taken under guard to stand his trial at Phnom-Penh, where no doubt he would share the fate of Chouan and Nguyen-van-Gioi. In an instant the demeanour of our captain had changed. With a snort of contempt he told his men to keep the stretcher on the lower deck and then started the *Bassac* on her way across the lake. Later, I made him laugh by referring to the brigand as "mon camarade"

and "mon compagnon de voyage," since we were the only passengers. The honest soul was amused easily.

He was very proud of his little ship, and with reason, for it was the best-run and most comfortable of all the steamers on the Mekong. No fault, too, could be found with the food, as there was a capable Chinese cook and the captain was a gourmet of judgment. To show my gratitude in the only way I could I presented him with one of the little *Guides Madrolle*, entitled "Vers Angkor," published by Hachette, which he seemed to covet. It contained an excellent map and a description of the river journey from Saigon.

During the whole of a scorching day we steamed across the glittering waters of the Tonlé-Sap, reaching the entrance of the river about sundown. Nothing happened to delay our voyage and at six o'clock on the following morning the *Bassac* reached the quay at Phnom-Penh. Here, it was necessary to change into another ship, which left an hour later for Saigon.

The new steamer was not the *Jules Rueff*, nor the excellent sister ship, but a far less worthy craft than either in every particular. And when I stepped on board I was amazed to see that the entire length of the lower deck was crowded with animals — bullocks, goats and pigs, many scores in number, as well as several crates filled with fowls. While ascending the companion-way I had to stride over the horns of a great beast that was thrust across the steps. The promenade deck was in an even worse state of confusion, being littered with natives and their baggage from stem to stern—Annamites, Chinese and Cambodians, some squatting on all fours, some lying at full length wrapped in a blanket. It was difficult to avoid treading on an arm or a leg as one walked to one's cabin. There were a dozen of these in the stern of the vessel, very comfortable cabins, too, when one succeeded in getting to them, each containing two berths. The dining-saloon was in the bows at the other end of the ship, approachable only by a troublesome steeplechase over prostrate bodies. In addition to

the crowd of natives there was a black corporal in charge of three obstreperous French poilus.

Infuriated by the pandemonium I sought out the captain. Anger lent eloquence to my indifferent French as I likened his ship to *un Arche de Noah* and told him that an elephant only was necessary to complete his menagerie. The captain bowed and smiled while he listened to these pleasantries and agreed with all that I said. Assuring me that the Company alone was to blame he begged me to be so good as to make my complaint to the managing-director in Saigon. Personally he hated the bullocks as much as I did, and would prefer to have no *indigènes* aboard his ship, but as they were here they must remain. Apart from putting them into the river he would do anything to oblige me.

“Que voulez-vous, monsieur ?”

I pointed out that it was unusual to allow a crowd of natives to bivouac outside the doors of the first-class cabins; and that, apart from all questions of sanitation, their chatter would prevent every one else from going to sleep. The captain shook his head with a reassuring smile, while he waved a couple of protesting fingers in the air. Monsieur need to have no misgivings, he declared. None of the passengers would be disturbed in their rest. All the natives were going to be sent below at nightfall.

It had to be left at that, but I knew that the promise was absurd. Unless the bullocks were thrown overboard, together with the pigs and the hens, there would be no room for the natives on the lower deck.

He was a *brave garçon* this captain, with the air of d'Artagnan and a fierce brown moustache. He had played a gallant part in the Boxer rebellion and also in the Great War, and it was rumoured that he was a *marquis* who had seen better days. Although in the middle fifties he sought to pass for thirty-five, and was successful very often, according to report, for he had the reputation of being a lion among the ladies. The walls of his cabin were covered with photographs of shapely girls in bathing *maillots*.

It was during luncheon in the dining-saloon—which I managed to reach with difficulty, since the deck resembled the Pool of Bethesda—that I gained this insight into the captain's character, my informant being a middle-aged dame, who sat opposite to me—the only other passenger. In broken English she asked me if she could send a telegram to Saigon, although, being a resident, she must have known better than I did. In reply I suggested that she should consult the captain.

"'E ees too flirt," she replied. "I like 'im not at all."

"Shall I ask him?" I inquired.

"I know 'im," she continued. "When ladies are alone 'e think 'e should be too easy with them."

And she proceeded to inform me that he had an old wife and told me about the rumoured marquise and of the captain's gallantry both in love and war.

Most probably she maligned him, and in any case she had no cause for apprehension since there was nothing provocative in her personal appearance. Oddly enough, too, she began to talk to him amicably soon after lunch, taking a seat beside him in a deck-chair, evidently having lost all fear of inflaming his passions. The *tête-à-tête* lasted for an hour or more, until the pair were joined by a French officer and his wife who had come aboard at one of the riverside towns. During the rest of the afternoon the four of them had a stormy debate about *l'affaire Bardez*.

It was a very hot day. The rainy season was over, and, since we were going down stream with the lightest of breezes behind us, there was scarcely any motion in the air. A seat in the bows was the only tolerable spot on the ship, for the odour of the oxen was nauseating and the habits of the natives, who were cooking and feeding incessantly, were not at all pleasant. It was with a malicious joy that I observed that the crates of cocks and hens had been placed immediately beneath the captain's cabin.

There were only three of us at dinner in the saloon that evening. The French officer and his wife had dis-

embarked, but another passenger had come aboard, a magistrate of sorts with a red button in his lapel. As usual on these boats the captain was dining with the *mécanicien* in his cabin next door to us. We had just reached the fish course, and the magistrate and the middle-aged lady, who had been discussing *l'affaire Bardez*, were beginning to wave their arms at one another, when their voices were drowned by a tremendous hubbub on the deck outside. The magistrate rushed to the door and flung it open, revealing our captain and the four soldiers in fierce altercation. Taking advantage of the dinner-hour the black corporal had led his poilus for a stroll in front of the captain's cabin.

The captain was furious at the invasion of what he regarded as his quarter-deck by steerage passengers. Probably he considered that these people were already more than sufficiently indulged by being permitted to occupy most of the first-class quarters. With truculent gestures and a voice of thunder he ordered the four soldiers to go below amongst the pigs and the bullocks !

It was a drastic command and it was resented. The black corporal answered in tones that had the ring of mutiny that there was no room on the lower deck, and, even if there was room, it was an insult to send French soldiers to herd with the beasts. Hedging considerably, for he perceived no doubt that his first order was unreasonable, the captain declared that at all events the soldiers must retire amidships immediately. Realizing that he had scored the first point, the black corporal retorted in effect, at the top of his voice, "J'y suis, j'y reste." The tumult grew more tempestuous, for the magistrate with the red button joined in, but the soldiers refused to budge an inch. All the rest of the promenade deck was crowded, shouted the black corporal. They had a right to stay where they were.

Walking to the door, I suggested to the captain that he should command the corporal to lead his men aft, threatening to report him to his commanding officer at

Saigon if he disobeyed, but the choleric veteran was in no mood to accept advice. With arms revolving like the sails of a windmill he began to curse and swear at the soldiers, expressing the hope that they would have atrocious experiences in the world to come, mentioning their mothers, too, in his imprecations. The black corporal responded with equal vigour, declaring that he would not be talked to in such a manner as he was a Frenchman. Going back to the dinner-table I asked the lady to translate my suggestion to the captain since he could not or would not understand me.

All at once the captain ceased to curse and to swear, and spoke one short, sharp sentence almost in a whisper; and, though I could not detect the words, the hiss of sarcasm in his tone was unmistakable. The effect was magical. In an instant the four vociferous soldiers became silent. Looking around I beheld them slinking away like dogs in disgrace. We saw them pass by the windows of the saloon with bent heads and shamefaced expressions; while, framed in the doorway, stood the captain with folded arms and a Douglas Fairbanks' smile, victorious and exultant. It was an amazing *bouleversement*.

Later in the evening I asked the captain how he had managed to perform this wonderful conjuring trick and what he had said to cow the soldiers so completely.

"Je les dis, je les dis," he answered; and then, pausing between each syllable he laboured to translate his miraculous speech into English, "I say I like bet-tar to 'ave tre 'undred ox than four soldats."

The comparison had been too much for the black corporal and his three brothers-in-arms. They had no retort to compete with it.

It was an unpleasant night, this last night of mine on the river Mekong. The natives were packed like herrings outside the cabin-doors and their metallic voices and the noise of their expectorations awoke me repeatedly. Some of them were chattering nearly all the time. The doors, too, had to be closed lest thieves might come in and steal,



which made the heat almost unbearable ; and the air that passed into the windows over a hundred human bodies had lost most of its freshness. It is not right that the Company should carry cattle on their passenger ships ; nor ought the natives to be herded like beasts on the promenade deck. The fares are expensive on these steamers and travellers are entitled to proper accommodation. Unless the Compagnie des Messageries Fluviales adopts modern methods the greater proportion of tourists will prefer to travel to Angkor by road.

The return journey from the Bungalow to Saigon only occupies two days and two nights, and at seven o'clock on the following morning I was driving once more along the Rue de Catinat to the Continental Palace Hotel.

## CHAPTER XI

### EDUCATION

WHEN I presented my letter of introduction to the Governor of Saigon he happened to be away on a tour in Cambodia, but I was received courteously by Monsieur F. Caire, his *Chef de Cabinet*, an agreeable young man, who inquired if there was anything in particular he could show me. In reply, I asked him to give me an order to visit one of the principal schools ; and thus it was that I found myself one morning at the Collège Chasseloup-Laubat, which takes its name from its founder, Count Chasseloup-Laubat, a former Governor-General. It is situated on the outskirts of the city, opposite to the palace of the Governor-General, and is the leading public school in Saigon. The impression that I formed was partly favourable and partly the reverse.

In the first place, the establishment seemed inadequate for the needs of such a large centre of population. I was told that there are nine hundred pupils, four hundred of whom are boarders ; and, if these figures are correct, the buildings are neither spacious enough nor sufficiently modern for the requirements of the school. Certainly, it would be impossible for them to accommodate larger numbers. The structure is old and rambling and the dining-hall especially appeared small and ill-ventilated. Of all the public edifices in Saigon its principal college is the most insignificant.

It is fortunate, however, in its government. Monsieur A. Saint-Luce Bauchelin, the director, unless an adept in duplicity, is the most gentle and benevolent headmaster that I have ever seen. He spoke to me in his study of the

school, before showing me over it, as though he loved every brick and stone and as if every pupil was one of his own family. And while he walked through the various classrooms the faces of the teachers brightened when they saw him and he had a pleasant nod and a kindly word for each. The children, too, who rose to their feet at our entrance, obviously did not stand in any awe of him and welcomed him with smiles. Several times, for my edification, he told a child—usually the smallest *gamin* in the class—to repeat a portion of the lesson of the day; and none of these small imps was in the least embarrassed by the ordeal, but each one seemed to make an effort to win his approval. All this was genuine, I am sure, and could not have been rehearsed previously. Had there been collusion it must have been betrayed involuntarily by one of the confederates.

Many nationalities attend the school, though there are few Chinese, who have schools of their own. For the most part the pupils are French, Eurasians and Annamites, the latter naturally being the most numerous. Co-education has been given a trial and it arouses misgivings to see small French girls sitting at their desks side by side with the sons of natives. So far the system has worked satisfactorily, I was told, and the daughters of the ruling race do not lose caste by having little Annamites as school companions. If parents wish their children to attend a public *lycée* here they must come, for at present there is no other of the same class in Saigon. Some of the leading people in the colony send their sons and daughters to the Collège Chasseloup-Laubat. They remain from the age of twelve until they are eighteen, when, if necessary, they proceed to a European university.

Strange to say, they play no games, Monsieur Bauchelin informed me, almost with tears in his eyes, and nothing that he had been able to do up to now had inspired them with any enthusiasm for sport. He could offer no explanation unless it was the climate.

"I wish we could resemble your English schools in this

respect," he sighed. "Our children miss much by not playing hockey and football."

He took me to see the new gymnasium that had just been built and stood regarding it sadly.

"The boys do not like it at all," he explained. "And the girls even less. It is not popular, but it is compulsory."

I looked at the forbidding place and was not astonished. It resembled an oversized Rugby fives-court, open at one end, bare whitewashed walls enclosing the three other sides. Within, there was a pair of parallel bars and a vaulting-horse, hard and unstuffed, and a singularly rigid horizontal bar. A deep coating of sand covered the whole of the floor, making it about as springy and resilient as a suet pudding. No one could be damaged by a fall, but agility was impossible. I could imagine the poor little gymnasts dragging their feet over this heavy ground, like children of Israel paddling through the wilderness, and I was not surprised that they hated their new gymnasium.

From this badly-contrived department I was led away by Monsieur Bauchelin to a classroom close at hand, where, with sparkling eyes and a proud smile, he revealed what seemed to give him more satisfaction than anything else in the *lycée*—an Annamite professor. He was a sturdy young man, this native schoolmaster, obviously virile and intelligent, and he was chalking a problem in algebra on the blackboard for a crowd of the more elderly pupils. He had taken a high degree at the Paris University, Monsieur Bauchelin told me, and was reckoned one of the best mathematicians in the colony.

"Très, très intelligent," the director exclaimed with elation, but, after a pause, he added regretfully, "the Annamites are not always so."

Nevertheless, many of the Annamite school children excel in drawing and painting, and I was taken to a room where their pictures were on view—the annual exhibition of prize-winners. Most of the work was excellent, showing imagination and a sense of colouring, and there were many amusing caricatures. The headmaster was quick to notice

the best of them, criticising intelligently, praising wherever he could. Unlike some of our English headmasters, Monsieur Bauchelin is wholly absorbed by his duties and regards his task as a whole-time job. One cannot imagine him as a scholastic Jekyll and Hyde, half dominie and half journalist.

During the latter part of my inspection of the College the director and I were accompanied by Mademoiselle Thuillin, the professor of English. This lady, who has spent ten years in England, speaks our language exceedingly well and is very popular with all the British residents in Saigon. Most of the newcomers take lessons from her in French. Choosing to believe that I was an enthusiast as regards popular education, Mademoiselle Thuillin was kind enough to give me an introduction to Captain Jean Billés, philanthropist and educationalist.

Soon after lunch on the following afternoon he called for me at the Continental Palace Hotel, a dapper, restless little man of about fifty, with an earnest clean-shaven face and as volatile as quicksilver, far more like an American than a Frenchman. There is scarcely a part of the world in which he has not fought for his country at some time or another. He now holds an important position in the Ministry of Agriculture at Saigon and all his leisure is devoted to acts of charity. No Chinaman ever worked harder for himself than Captain Billés works for other people. Hurrying me to his motor-car he begged me to take a seat inside, apologizing for not being able to sit with me as it was necessary for him to sit beside his chauffeur.

The necessity was evident enough as soon as we started, for this chauffeur is the worst driver in Indo-China. Captain Billés had a hand on his arm and was coaching the man all the time ; but, occasionally, his attention slackened as he leant back to speak a word to me, and at these moments we had several miraculous escapes, missing vehicles, much larger than our own, by a hairbreadth. It was a drive of five or six miles, for our place of destination was in Cholon, and I was glad when it was over.

I had been brought to a school for "Orphans," where

half-caste children—the sons and daughters of French fathers and native mothers—were cared for and educated. It is an institution for which Captain Billés works untiringly, taking an active part in the management, contriving methods of raising funds for its support. The establishment is a large one. At the time of my visit there were about a hundred children and the numbers tend to increase. Few of their fathers were dead. Nearly all had gone back to France or were unknown.

It was a day or two before Christmas and a party was taking place. In the garden a Christmas-tree had been set up, decorated with flags and candles and laden with the cheapest of toys—penny whistles, tin trumpets, wooden dolls and the like. A crowd of children, tumultuous and expectant, was awaiting the distribution of the presents—some of them Annamite obviously, others with an almost European complexion—and it was pathetic to watch their eagerness to receive the paltry gifts. Captain Billés gave away the toys, his appearance being hailed with shouts of joy, and he was incomparable. He seemed to know the name of every child and joked and laughed with them all, at the same time chaffing the schoolmistresses who stood around to make them join in the frivolity. The small Eurasians pawed his sleeve and plucked at the hem of his coat, vying with one another to attract his attention. And they followed him about and clung to him as he walked over the lawn after he had given a present to each, and he was always hemmed in by a friendly chattering crowd. The energetic little man appeared to revel in the uproar and his keen, kind face was beaming with delight.

When at last the youngsters had gone indoors for tea I asked Captain Billés what he thought of the Eurasian problem and if these half-caste children would be able to compete with their fellow-citizens from France or with the more intelligent of Annamites in after life. He did not seem optimistic. Usually, he answered sadly, the boy was incorrigible, for upon leaving school he joined the family of his mother, which was of the lowest class in nine cases

out of ten, and became one of them, soon losing all the benefits of education. The girls, however, sometimes were more European in character than native ; and if, as often happened, they obtained a good situation and married a Frenchman or an Annamite of position, they remained civilized members of society. But, as a general rule, Captain Billés admitted regretfully, the same thing happens in Indo-China as in British India, where, so the English declare, the Eurasian has all the vices of both parents and none of their virtues.

I pointed out to him that the Eurasians are given little chance of "making good" in India. In most instances they have not the advantage of being brought up under a father's care, and, even when this was so, the fact that they belonged to a race that is despised both by the Europeans and the natives must be an irreparable disadvantage. In Ceylon, I urged, there was a different story to tell, for there the old Dutch settlers had married native wives, and from their families had sprung the sturdy Burgher class, a most estimable and efficient people. There were also the Eurasians of Java to be considered, a population that was treated on equal terms by the ruling race and competed successfully both in business and in the Civil Service. Captain Billés replied very truly that Indo-China was a much younger colony than Java or Ceylon, and only time and experience would show whether it could deal with the half-caste problem successfully. It was a stupendous problem, he agreed, and the leading anthropologists of Europe should combine to produce an authoritative work upon the subject.

Meanwhile, until the law relating to illegitimate children imposes greater obligations upon the father, he believed that there was no better way of dealing humanely with *les métis* than by bringing them up in establishments like this one at Cholon. Here, all that charity can do to make their childhood happy and fit them for a useful life is attempted by the good people who conduct the institution ; and they are given food, shelter, amusement

and education, which compare favourably with that received by children in better-class schools. Being a practical man Captain Billés is of the opinion that alleviation is better than no remedy at all, and does not waste his time in sighing after the unattainable. It is the work of men such as he that gives the lie to the asseverations of Léon Werth and his party that the colonists of Indo-China have no sympathy with the native population.

Leaving his half-caste wards at tea, Captain Billés drove me to another school in Cholon in which he was interested, a school where Chinese girls are educated. Since it was holiday time the pupils were giving a theatrical performance, which he wanted me to see. But it was over when we arrived and the audience had departed. Only a few gaudy draperies, which had served for scenery, in one of the largest classrooms, were left to show that it had taken place. My companion seemed much perturbed, more on his own account, I fancy, than mine, for I believe that he had been looking forward to the show. A bevy of Chinese maidens between the ages of twelve and sixteen surrounded him at once, full of commiseration for his disappointment. They were children of well-to-do parents, dressed in good European clothes, and the front teeth of nearly all of them glittered with gold. It is an affectation of the race, I was informed, this display of dental handicraft, and is not necessitated by decay.

Evidently, the girls were old friends of Captain Billés and on the best of terms with him. Having daughters of his own he knew how to amuse them, making them shriek with laughter at his sallies. They were delighted by his efforts to remember all their names and to pronounce them correctly in their own language. They danced around him and clapped their hands, pawing him as affectionately as the little Eurasians had done. Perhaps they knew, or instinct told them, that because the kind-hearted soldier had suffered the saddest bereavement that can fall to the lot of man he was in need of all the human sympathy he could find. And, as I watched him



in the midst of the merry throng and beheld the usual look of sorrow fade from his expression while he strove to amuse the little Chinese girls, it occurred to me how lucky for him it was that he had been able to find distraction in good works ; and I thought also how fortunate it was for France that she possessed humanitarians like this in her far-flung dominions, who were prepared to sacrifice rest and recreation in order to devote themselves to social service. Men such as Captain Billés are of greater worth than a score of loquacious Governor-Generals.

Early next morning Captain Billés came to my hotel once more and took me off in his car to see another of his charitable enterprises. It was well, perhaps, that the drive was a short one on this occasion, for the chauffeur was in a most enterprising mood and we had more narrow escapes than on the previous day. In a few minutes, however, we had arrived safely at a brand-new building not far from the market-place, where I was told to alight. It was a "Home for Working Girls"—just completed, but not inaugurated yet—the latest of my friend's hobbies, one that had been conceived and created entirely by him.

The object of the establishment, as its name implies, was to provide board and lodging for a number of young women, shop-girls principally, who held situations in Saigon, and there were more applicants already than the place could accommodate. It was the knowledge that numbers of working girls in the city had no homes of their own that had led Captain Billés to found the institution. There was to be the supervision of a housekeeper, but a tolerant supervision, and the cost of living in the place would be infinitesimal. The government had been induced to lend its support, but large contributions had come from private subscribers.

I was shown over the building. Everything was modern and up-to-date, and it seemed very comfortable. There was a dining-hall and a sitting-room, and the dormitories were divided into cubicles. Nothing in Europe could have been more adequate. The opening ceremony

was to take place on the following day, and a van at the door was delivering cases of champagne. A committee of ladies—the wives and sisters of exalted notabilities—who were to help in the management of the home, was in full attendance. Captain Billés was much lionized, and seemed to enjoy it.

I was invited cordially to come to the inauguration, but, knowing that the speeches would be dry and the champagne sweet, I pleaded a previous engagement. And in a spirit of mischief I suggested that an invitation should be sent to the English Vice-Consul, who, I declared, was a young man given to good works and would be capable no doubt of making a speech on behalf of the British Government.

## CHAPTER XII

### LAST DAYS IN SAIGON

CHRISTMAS was drawing near when I arrived in Saigon on my return from Angkor and I expected to spend the day alone, but I found an invitation to dinner awaiting me from Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Denholm. Mr. Denholm is a Scottish engineer, who specializes in machinery for rice manufacture, and is one of the chief experts in this class of work in Indo-China. All the English colony had been bidden to the feast, about twenty men and three ladies, and most of them were present.

Believing that we should dine indoors, I was surprised—when the gong sounded—to see the host lead the way through the French windows into the garden. Following him we beheld one of the prettiest scenes imaginable. The night was warm and fragrant and the sky glittered with stars. All around were luxuriant trees. Festoons of Chinese lanterns were hanging from every bough, and the brightly-lit dinner-table was spread beneath the feathery branches of a great fern-palm. A gentle breeze rustled the leaves overhead; the glow of the richly-coloured lamps was just enough to reveal the greenness of the foliage. It fulfilled one's ideal of a setting for a banquet in the tropics.

The repast was long and elaborate, with many courses, but it was cooked by a Chinaman upon a brick furnace in the open air. And every dish was perfection. Turkey and sausages and plum pudding presented no more difficulties to the admirable chef than *ris de veau* and ice-cream. The meal, too, was served without fuss or delay by two more Chinamen, who were not in the least embarrassed by

the largeness of the company. Even the plum pudding was brought in ablaze in the correct style, and, although it was two years since the head-boy had seen the dish, he had remembered exactly how it was done. The housewife of southern Asia is fortunate indeed in her domestic service.

It surprised me that the mosquitoes were not more troublesome in a garden with so many trees, but the hostess had some specific burning beneath the table which kept them at bay. In Siam the pest is so unbearable that the women have to encase their legs in sacks when they sit down to dine. The heat, too, was not oppressive, for this was the coolest period of the year. Probably the thermometer registered about 80° Fahrenheit.

After dinner there was bridge and music and dancing—although, with so few ladies in the company, dancing could not become general—and the party did not break up until two o'clock in the morning. It was pleasant to see one's country folk spending such a merry Christmas night in a foreign country nine thousand miles from home. It was good to observe that they were on such friendly terms with one another. For, owing to circumstances, the English colony in Saigon is smaller by far than in any other colonial city of equal size in the Far East, and life would be far less agreeable for its members if it was disunited. The hospitable host and hostess of this evening are responsible in a great measure for this friendliness. For my part I owe them a debt of gratitude for saving me from a lonely Christmas.

Some time previously I had visited one of the principal rice-mills at Cholon under the guidance of Mr. Denholm. It was a large three-storey building, resembling one of our flour-mills at home in method and general equipment. Unfortunately, most of the plant is boarded in, so it is not possible to view the whole of the process of manufacture. It is a complicated process, although it is merely the shedding of the husk from the grain, and requires much elaborate machinery.

The art of the rice-miller is to detach the shell without damaging the kernel ; and it is necessary for the paddy to be treated in samples of equal size and to use currents of air to blow it through the crushing stones. Other machines then conduct the rice over sieves to cleanse it from dust and remove the husk from the grain entirely. Subsequently, the grain is exposed to the action of a whitening machine, which grinds off the inner cuticle or red skin. It is important that the rice should be ground sufficiently to be of a good colour, but not ground enough to reduce its bulk, the quality of the rice depending on size as well as colour. Much of the machinery was of English make, and it was satisfactory to behold a fine compound steam-engine of 450 horse-power—made by Messrs. Robey of Lincoln—which drove the whole plant.

The factory looked dirty and there was a great deal of dust everywhere. It lay thick upon walls and ceiling ; it covered every inch of metal that was not in motion. The air was full of it. To any one accustomed to the comparative cleanliness of an English workshop this state of things appears intolerable, but it should be borne in mind that our own factory legislation is of modern growth and that our mills were filthy a few generations ago. The Chinamen, who worked in the place, seemed sturdy and active fellows, their health evidently being unaffected by the dust, which is regarded as a matter of no importance. The whole of the staff is Chinese.

The steam-boilers interested me. They are fitted with special furnaces that burn the paddy husk, which has been collected from the various machines and stored in the yard. It is the only fuel that is used, so the shell of the rice pays for the grinding of the rice. The annual saving in wood and coal must be considerable. It reminded me of the familiar tale about the fur-trader's farm, where rats and silver-foxes were bred in adjoining enclosures. The foxes were fed on the rats and the rats in turn ate the foxes after they had been killed for their fur ; so the establishment, like the rice - mill, was self - supporting. Formerly, the

smoke from furnaces that burnt the paddy husk used to cause a grievous nuisance, for the charred particles were scattered over a large area. Recently, however, an appliance that consumes the whole of the fuel has been invented by the ingenious Mr. Denholm, with the result that the chimney of a rice-mill no longer deposits showers of soot and grit all over the town.

The business of rice-milling is a profitable one. The factory which I inspected has a capital of £80,000, and the annual profit has shown an average of £20,000 for several years. Its owner is an unassuming Chinaman, who lives a simple life in an unostentatious home, and has no extravagances. It is to be hoped that he is not storing up a huge fortune, like many of his countrymen, for the benefit of spendthrift sons. Of all the products of the East none is more detestable than the opulent young Chink, when he happens to be both idle and "westernized." Nature does not intend that the Chinaman should live solely for amusement.

It is unfortunate that the French are not more successful as rice-millers. From the point of view both of prestige and finance they ought to dominate the chief commercial industry in their own country. Nevertheless, in spite of their ingenuity in trade they cannot hold their own against the competition of the Chinaman. There are three or four rice-mills in Cholon belonging to a French company, but all of them were standing idle at the time of my visit. Every one of the other mills, owned by Chinamen in every case, was working full time.

It is the control of the paddy market, of course, that gives the Celestial this monopoly. Competitors have to come to him to buy their grain and naturally he makes the price prohibitive. All over the colony the Annamite peasant-proprietor is in debt to the Chinese usurer. In many cases the Chinaman holds a mortgage upon the land, so that the cultivator is practically his tenant since the money never will be repaid; and with the possession of the soil the control of production follows automatically. The Chinaman is rice-king everywhere.

Of course the French do not approve of this state of things and are making efforts to find a remedy. Some of the large financial houses are endeavouring to free the Annamites from the clutches of the moneylenders by granting loans to them on easy terms. One of these establishments is the *Société Coloniale et Française*, which has just built for itself palatial headquarters near the Boulevard de la Somme. It is to be hoped that the attempts to benefit the peasant-proprietor will be successful, but he is a thriftless person and a struggle against the character of a whole race is a stupendous task indeed. Still, it should not be impossible for the banks to supplant the Chinese mortgagers.

A friend showed me over the offices of the *Société* in question when they were nearing completion. It is amazing how quickly a building is constructed in this part of the world. The place was a mere shell when I arrived in Saigon. Six weeks later the roof was on and it was ready for the carpenters and decorators. A fragile scaffolding of bamboos, without a single plank or ladder, was the only external aid that the builders required. The native workmen, stripped to the waist, were able to climb over this flimsy structure as nimbly as squirrels, apparently hanging on by their toes, with their hands free for hod or trowel. It was a fine-looking building many storeys in height, faced with white plaster that resembled stone, and would not have seemed incongruous in Lombard Street.

Saigon must be a difficult place to get away from in March and April when the principal exodus to Europe occurs. The *Messageries Maritimes* will guarantee no passage until communication is established with the ship two days before it reaches port, and no cabin is assigned until after the vessel arrives. However, few passengers were travelling west on the 28th of December, 1925, the day that I had chosen for my departure, and my ship, the *Paul-Lecat*, was almost empty. My visit to Indo-China had lasted eight weeks exactly and I was sorry that it had

come to an end. Some day I hope to explore the colony more thoroughly.

As usual, the efficient porter at the Continental Palace Hotel had put my luggage on board early in the afternoon, and about seven o'clock I went down to the ship with the intention of dining there. Upon entering the saloon I had an amazing experience of Gallic parsimony. When I desired the *maitre d'hôtel* to find me a place at table he asked to see my ticket; and, after examining it, he informed me politely that I had "not the right" to a meal until the following morning. Considering that the two days' voyage to Singapore—whither I was travelling—had cost me £15 it seemed to me that the Company would have made a handsome profit even though I had eaten one extra dinner at their expense. However, I was glad of the excuse to return to the Continental Palace Hotel to dine out of doors on the *terrasse* once more.

The ship did not leave until nearly one o'clock in the morning. The departure of a liner is an event in Saigon and a large company flocked on board. During the whole evening there was a general *vin d'honneur* in compliment to those who were going home. All the rank and fashion of the city seemed to be gathered on the promenade deck or in the saloons. Officialdom was present in full force; the ladies wore their smartest frocks. A few friends came to bid me good-bye.

The *Paul-Lecat* is a few hundred tons less than the *André-Lebon*, but is similar in most other particulars. It was as well navigated and the management was better, for the stewards were more attentive and the food was fairly good. The two-berth cabin on the main deck, which I had to myself, was one of the largest and best appointed that I have ever occupied.

The majority of the passengers were Americans, nearly all of whom had visited China during the last month or two in spite of the civil war; and they had innumerable stories to tell of their adventures. Most of them declared that they had been held up at some time or other on the



Chinese railways, on which occasions they seem to have suffered severe privations, or were nearly captured by marauding soldiers. The best story of all was told of a party of tourists, who arrived at Tientsin or Shanghai while making a cruise around the world in an ocean liner. Peking, of course, was their objective, but unfortunately two hostile armies had been advancing towards the railway track somewhere up-country and were expected to come into action within a few hours. The Yankees, however, would not be turned aside by a trifle such as this. The hat was sent around, some thousands of dollars were collected, and a telegram was dispatched to each of the rival generals, offering a bribe if the battle was postponed. And called off it was immediately. The two armies went into camp opposite to one another on either side of the line and waited tranquilly for several days until the Americans had seen all the sights of Peking and their dragoman had got them back in safety to their ship. Whereupon the Chinese generals proceeded with their battle.

The *Paul-Lecat* is a good sea boat. On the first day there was a breeze and the waves were lumpy, but on the second day, as we drew nearer to the Malayan coast, we ran into warm and showery weather. There were many children on board, but they behaved much better than *les enfants* of the *André-Lebon*. Actually, a Frenchman was seen to spank his small boy on deck for some trivial misbehaviour. We left Saigon early on a Monday morning and about nine o'clock on Tuesday evening the lights of Singapore were visible in the distance; but, as liners do not often enter the harbour after dark, the ship slowed down until sunrise. Possibly, the approach is dangerous at night, or it may be impossible to run alongside the quay. In the daytime the entrance seems broad and untrammelled enough for any purpose, being wider and less picturesque than it is on the western side.

However, a collision between a tramp and a liner did occur some days before our arrival. It was early in the afternoon and visibility was perfect, but by some means the

two ships came into contact. Each captain blamed the other, but apparently neither gave way, and the liner was damaged so badly that it almost sank before it arrived in port. The sailors on both vessels were unanimous that no one was in fault, declaring that the accident was the act of God. It appeared that the liner had both a Bishop and a coffin on board ; and, as all nautical men are aware, such a combination is certain to bring disaster. On several occasions I have travelled in the same ship as a Bishop, and once upon a time a Cardinal was my fellow-passenger too, but to my knowledge the fatal coalition has never occurred. If so, the presence of the coffin was kept secret.

Evidently, we carried nothing of evil omen on the *Paul-Lecat*, for soon after daybreak on Wednesday morning we reached the wharf at Singapore without mishap.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SINGAPORE

**T**HERE is an air of grandeur about Singapore and everything appears to be on a large scale. The size and populousness, the wealth and importance of the great seaport are manifest at first sight. It has natural surroundings of much beauty ; it is a handsome and stately city in itself.

Unlike Saigon, evidence of its riches can be seen before one disembarks. All around the shores of the harbour there are docks and store sheds, workshops and factories, indicating the extent and volume of its commerce. Its numerous wharfs always seem to be occupied by great liners and cargo ships from every country in the world. The Roads within the breakwater are crowded with coasting vessels of all descriptions. When driving from the quay through the business part of the town its opulence is still more conspicuous. The offices and warehouses, the shops and stores suggest that its trade must be equal to that of any port in the Mediterranean.

Not only is it an imposing city, but an exceedingly attractive one also. When passing over the Cavenagh Bridge across the river from the commercial into the residential quarter of Singapore, the first glimpse is seen of its picturesque aspect. The bridge is a suspension bridge, narrow and inadequate, but the river that it spans is full of interest. It was the old harbour, and its left bank, which bends almost in a half-circle, is crowded with ancient Chinese houses. Of various elevations and in different styles of architecture, they appear to be painted in all the colours of the rainbow ; and, when the sun is revealing

every line and shade of them, the curved frontage of the irregular buildings seems as complex and kaleidoscopic as a street in Venice. The water is covered with craft of every description, laden with merchandise. Canoes and barges, filled with busy lightermen, flit about in all directions up and down the stream. No scene in the East has been painted or photographed more frequently than the view of the Singapore river from the Cavenagh Bridge.

On the other side of the bridge we come to great blocks of government buildings, situated in open spaces amidst tropical trees. Here is the Court of Justice and a council chamber with the necessary departmental offices: also the Victoria Memorial, a handsome pile which contains a theatre and is used as the Town Hall. In front stands a fine statue of Sir Stamford Raffles, through whose foresight Great Britain came into possession of Singapore in the year 1819.

Beyond the Victoria Memorial a wide lawn extends along the sea-front for four or five hundred yards, an expanse of grass-land known as the Padang, which is spacious enough to contain two cricket fields as well as a football ground. At one extremity is the fine club-house of the Singapore cricket club; at the other a large pavilion for the use of Eurasians. In front stretch the Roads, filled with ships of every shape and size, and beyond is the open sea.

This portion of the city is singularly beautiful. Inland, across the avenue that skirts the Padang, is the Anglican Cathedral, a graceful edifice with a tall spire, surrounded by a broad lawn resembling the close of an English cathedral and encircled by trees. It is like a vision of home. Skirting the close a fine street leads away from the sea; and, passing through more pleasant open spaces with public buildings and abundance of foliage, it enters at last into the Orchard Road. This highway ought to be the most splendid in Singapore, for it forms the approach to Government House and to the chief residential quarter in the suburbs. But,

alas, its whole length almost is disfigured by squalid Chinese dwellings. It is to be hoped that the municipal authorities will be strong and of good courage and take heroic measures, demolishing without scruple every hovel from end to end of Orchard Road, so that a great boulevard may come into being, worthy of one of the proudest and richest cities in the East.

Likewise, it is possible to make splendid improvements on the sea-front. For about a quarter of a mile on the verge of the Padang a marine drive has been constructed along the shore, a fine promenade indeed, but wholly insufficient. Unquestionably, Singapore is destined to become the first and most important seaport in Asia, if not in the whole world. It is the great junction between Europe and the Far East. Eventually, it will be in direct communication with Vancouver and San Francisco as it is with Sydney and Melbourne. Its shipping must grow larger every year; the prosperity of the Malay Peninsula will continue to increase; and within a short time a Naval Base is to be established in the Straits of Johore. If the rulers of Singapore take a proper pride in their city they will be ambitious for it to become one of the most beautiful in existence. Let them emulate the people of Rio de Janeiro. It should not be difficult to build a marine drive along the whole length of the coast from the Padang to Sea View, a distance of five miles, making as magnificent a highway as some of those in the capital of Brazil. When such a route borders the shore, and a reconstructed Orchard Road sweeps inland between the heights of Fort Canning and the slopes of Government Park, the new Singapore will challenge comparison with any town-planning achievement that France has accomplished. But these boulevards must be brilliantly lighted, and there should be avenues of trees. A devoted lover of Singapore, I am jealous of her welfare and believe that no embellishment should be denied to her.

At first sight the spacious park around Government House gives the impression of being a park in England.

The illusion is caused by its wonderful turf, smooth, green and luxuriant, for, in consequence of a consistent rainfall, Malaya can produce lawns and meadows equal to those at home. The deception, however, vanishes immediately one takes notice of the various species of palms, which are dotted about amidst trees and bushes of less tropical appearance. The land rises in a gentle slope to the crest of a blunt hill, the top of which is crowned by the residence of the Governor, a palatial mansion with splendid reception-rooms. From here there is a view over the sea on one side and across the open country on the other. Not far away is the Colonial Secretary's house, the home of Sir Hayes and Lady Marriott, who are famous for their hospitality.

Driving away from the gates of Government Park down the Orchard Road, past the open spaces occupied by the Museum, a Tennis Club, and the Raffles Institution, we arrive once more on the sea-front at the eastern extremity of the Padang, where stands the huge Raffles Hotel. It has been celebrated by Kipling, and is the chief resort of the American tourist. Abutting on to the garden and facing the sea is a spacious pavilion—open on three sides, and adjoining the dining-hall—where dances take place in the evening three times a week. The bedrooms in the various annexes communicating with the main building are cool and airy. Excellent though the Raffles Hotel may be in every particular, it must, however, give precedence to the Europe Hotel, which is situated at the western end of the Padang nearer to the business quarter of the city.

The Europe Hotel, too, faces the sea and is divided from the Padang merely by a road. Its reception-rooms have been made adequate after elaborate alteration, and there is a restaurant and a lounge and a large dining-hall, which, unlike that at the Raffles Hotel, has to serve also as a ballroom. But the rest of the building is old-fashioned and ill-suited to the tropics. It is wonderful that a first-class hotel can be conducted under such circumstances.

No one is more anxious than the manager to level the place to the ground and build anew.

This manager is a genius, otherwise he would have been unable to create the best hotel in Asia in such an uncompromising environment. His name is Arthur Odell, but he is no relation to the famous veteran of the Savage Club. All sorts of stories are told of his prowess. Once upon a time, it is said, the whole of the kitchen staff went on strike when the hotel was full, whereupon he cooked the dinner for all his guests, aided by two European chefs, without turning a hair. And none of the mutinous staff were ever allowed to come back again. Beyond all question, Mr. Odell is a master of his craft. There are few things beneath his roof—except the architecture of the premises, and for this he is not responsible—at which the most captious person can grumble.

Such a man is a splendid asset to the colony. He has made the name of the Europe Hotel as familiar a household word as that of Singapore itself. The renown of one is inseparable from that of the other; the two cannot be dissociated. A superlative *maitre d'hôtel* is sure of a place in history. *Ciro* and *Ritz* will be remembered when most contemporary statesmen are forgotten. And thus it is inevitable that Arthur Odell will occupy a niche in the temple of fame beside the three other paramount benefactors of Malaya—*Birch* and *Swettenham* and *Raffles*.

Additional accommodation will be required in Singapore when the Naval Base in the *Johore Straits* is completed. The Europe Hotel must be demolished and a new hotel, worthy of the great seaport, created in its stead. Its situation, facing the *Padang* and the open sea, cannot be improved. Its area, however, is too small. The Municipal Buildings stand beside it, an obsolete edifice, which the City Fathers intend to pull down and replace. I beseech them to abandon the scheme! Such an incomparable position should not be wasted upon *Bumble* and his myrmidons. The authorities ought to build the most sumptuous hotel in the world upon the whole site; and,

when it is constructed, they should instal Mr. Odell as manager under contract for ten years, so that the caravanserai shall begin its career under the best auspices. By this means the city will gain an immense revenue and its rulers will earn the gratitude of generations still unborn.

Upon arriving at an Asiatic town it is a good plan to take a rickshaw for an hour at a time, permitting the coolie to trot whither he chooses, and stopping him at any place of interest. In this manner one soon acquires a knowledge of the locality. In Singapore, however, there are two objections to this method. It is probable that a rain-storm will descend during the drive; it is inevitable that the "boy" will lose himself irretrievably. The *coolie-pousse* of Singapore is the most thick-headed Chinaman that ever breathed, and, if you tell him "pergi Europe Hotel," he is quite likely to take you to Raffles. Moreover, the hood and the apron of the rickshaw are by no means impervious to a tropical deluge. For a short course a rickshaw is well enough, but for a long journey it is better to take a motor-car.

Singapore, as every one knows, is situated on an island a little larger than the Isle of Wight, but only those who have been there realize that this island is very beautiful. The suburbs are reached at the end of Orchard Road, soon after passing Government Park, and the newcomer will be charmed and surprised by the appearance of the English bungalows. In some ways the architecture resembles the Basque, and most of the houses have deep verandas and gables and frontages of stucco and timber; but, in spite of the gorgeous hibiscus hedges and the blaze of tropical flowers and creepers, the smooth soft lawns, usually as trim as a bowling-green, overcome all other impressions and make each homestead look unmistakably English. Most of them have a tennis-court, while all have a garage, for a motor-car is an indispensable beast of burden in Malaya.

Beyond the residential quarter and not far from the golf-course at Tanglin Barracks—which is as verdant and



well-tended as any in Europe — there are the famous Botanical Gardens, the most lovely spot in the island and a fashionable rendezvous on a fine evening. They cover the slopes of a low hill, intersected by sinuous roads, and all the blooms and blossoms that grow seem to flourish here. The conservatories display the rarest orchids; the lake is covered with all sorts and shades of water-lilies; there are great thickets of palm trees everywhere. It is one of the most gorgeous exhibitions of tropical flora and foliage in the world.

The island of Singapore is undulating, nowhere rising to a height of more than five hundred feet, but during the drive round the Gap—one of the favourite excursions—an exquisite panorama across the fertile country can be enjoyed with views of the coast. Although some of the highways become monotonous owing to the sombre rubber plantations, the groves of palms, interspersed with picturesque native villages, the orchards of fruit trees and the fields of grass make most of the landscape pleasant and full of surprises. The prolific abundance of the tropics provides constant diversity. Another popular drive leads through winding lanes, shaded by trees, to the reservoir of the city, a beautiful sheet of water lying amidst hanging woods and irregular green hills. On the way there, several ornate Chinese residences in extensive gardens are to be seen, and occasionally we catch a glimpse of some gaudy pagoda.

A fresh part of the pretty island may be seen by following the eastern road through one of the native slums of the city as far as Sea View. Traversing dense mangrove swamps and groves of coco-nut trees, we arrive at a commodious hotel standing upon a wide lawn amongst clusters of palms close to the beach. Not far away is a plantation of casuarina trees. On every Sunday night—the only night of the week when there is no public dance in Singapore—dinner is served on the terrace of the Sea View Hotel, followed by an open-air cinema exhibition.

But the most famous drive of all takes one across the

island from south to north—a distance of fourteen miles—to the Johore Causeway. This is the artificial isthmus—a fine engineering feat completed recently—that joins Singapore to the mainland of Malaya. It spans the narrow strait, which is only half a mile in width, over which it conveys both a motor road and the railway. It is possible now to travel by train from Singapore to Bangkok in Siam through the whole length of the Malay Peninsula.

On the eastern side of the straits, several miles from the Causeway, the excavations for the new Naval Base have been commenced. During its construction thousands of coolies will be employed in addition to scores of English engineers. When completed it will be the headquarters of a great fleet, as important an arsenal as Malta. The officers and crews of the ships, together with their inevitable entourage, must increase the European population considerably. The effect of the new development on the trade and prosperity of Malaya will be incalculable.

Singapore remains a free port just as Raffles intended. There is no Custom House; only tobacco and alcohol are subject to taxation, being a government monopoly. Under these conditions it has continued to thrive and develop without impediment. During the last thirty years Santa Cruz and Las Palmas in the Canary Isles—also free ports—have made similar progress. A system of protection may be beneficial to a new colony when essential manufactures must be cosseted, or to a nation in which staple industries have to be maintained; but it is questionable whether a merchant community, dependent upon its shipping, or a country living on the export of raw materials will gain any considerable advantage from a wall of tariffs.

Sir Stamford Raffles, to whom we owe the city and island of Singapore, died at the age of forty-five, exhausted by long residence in the tropics, before the splendid possession which he had secured for England began to justify its existence. He had been able to spend only a year in the colony, being absorbed in the administration



THE CAUSEWAY, SINGAPORE



first of Java and then of Sumatra during the English occupation of those islands. In recent years his memory has been rescued from the oblivion into which it had fallen. Many books have acknowledged his achievements and his fellow-countrymen are aware how much England is indebted to him. Not long ago the great proconsul seemed to be forgotten entirely, while his name had acquired a bastard celebrity through a popular novel, the hero of which, one Raffles, is a gentleman thief.<sup>1</sup> It would be lamentable if the renowned name were to be remembered merely in such a guise, for the original Raffles was a pioneer of empire, almost as illustrious as Robert Clive or Warren Hastings.

<sup>1</sup> The late E. W. Hornung, the distinguished author of *The Amateur Cracksman*, was the last person in the world to write a line that would affect the memory of a great Englishman adversely. The name of his hero must have been chosen haphazard, and he could not have foreseen that it would become a household word.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SOME OF THE PEOPLE OF SINGAPORE

**A**T the time of my first visit to Singapore, when the *André-Lebon* made its call there on the 2nd of November, 1925, two sad tragedies had cast a gloom over the European population.

One of these was a bathing fatality which happened at the swimming-club on the open beach between Sea View and the city. A young English lady was the victim. She had come with a picnic party, arranged because it was her birthday, and before luncheon she and her friends went to bathe. The poor girl dived from the spring-board, but immediately she had touched the water there was a swirl and a lashing of foam and she was struggling in the jaws of a shark. Although a man plunged bravely to the rescue and brought her ashore in a few moments, she died before a doctor could be brought to the spot. It was pitiful, most pitiful, and friends were denied even the consolation of punishing the cruel monster that had done the deed.

A similar incident has never occurred within the memory of man. Tens of thousands of people have swum in the same place for half a century without mishap. It is unusual for a shark to be found so close to the shore. Now, of course, a palisade encloses the bathing-place and there is no danger. At Penang, however, and in other parts of the coast, men and women swim in the open sea in spite of the terrible object-lesson. Though the chance of a similar catastrophe may be infinitesimal, it does not seem worth while to run the risk when a method of prevention is so easy.

The other tragedy took place on a coasting steamer,

called the *Klang*, which plies between Singapore and Penang. A Malay, who ran amok, was the cause of it. In a sudden fit of frenzy he turned upon some of his fellow-countrymen with his *kris* and had butchered several of them before they could defend themselves. Then, leaping the barrier, he rushed on to the first-class deck to seek fresh victims. Fortunately, there were few passengers on board and these managed to escape into their cabins, but the murderer happened to encounter the chief engineer, whom he wounded severely. At this moment the captain came down from the bridge to ascertain the cause of the uproar.

Captain Macdonald was a veteran in the service of the company and he was known to almost every one in Malaya, his ship being much more popular than the railway train with travellers up and down the coast. A man of genial disposition he was beloved by every one, especially by his officers and crew. Such was his kindly nature that he did not draw the revolver which he carried in the pocket of his coat, but tried to pacify the native with soothing words. The result was inevitable. In a moment the madman sprang upon him and had stabbed him through and through. Eventually the Malay was shot down and killed before he had found any more victims.

Upon my second arrival in Singapore, on the last day of 1925, the city was on the eve of its festivities for the New Year. There were fancy-dress balls at each of the four or five principal hotels, that at the "Europe," which I attended, being perhaps the most popular. It was a pretty and elaborate spectacle.

The women of Singapore dress well. Indeed, their frocks seem as though they were fresh from London and Paris. All the latest fashions appear here soon after they are in vogue at home, and no one has any difficulty in keeping up to date who can afford to do so. Most of the ladies are good-looking, too, and have boundless energy. Occasionally, one notices a pale cheek when the holiday to Europe has been postponed too long, but almost every

woman recovers her bloom after she has been home to England. A visit to the highlands of Brastagi in Sumatra, a journey of a day and a half, seems just as efficacious. Unfortunately, there is no such excellent hill-station in the Malay Peninsula.

The ballroom costume of the men, for the most part, is ordinary evening-dress, the most unsuitable attire for dancing in the tropics that could be imagined. But some are wise enough to wear a drill mess-jacket, and soft shirts are not uncommon. At Government House, however, a tail-coat is compulsory, with white tie and waistcoat in addition, terrific instruments of torture when the temperature is eighty-five degrees in the shade. Its wearer feels just like an ancient Crusader must have felt in his suit of mail armour on a midsummer's day in the Holy Land. Yet, in spite of the heat the men of Singapore are the keenest of dancing men, which is not strange since they have pretty and pleasant dancing partners. There is a dance on six nights of the week either at the Europe Hotel or at the "Raffles."

While watching the New Year's ball at the Europe Hotel it occurred to me that there was something unusual in its appearance. And presently I understood what it was. All the dancers were young! No woman in the room appeared older than forty-five; there was not a man of more than fifty. The colony, of course, is peopled for the most part by youth. When folks become elderly they retire home; or, if they stay, they do not cumber the dancing-floor. So, unlike our English ballrooms, where the grey-beards and the dowagers crowd out the poor young folk, those in Singapore are a scene of youth and beauty.

Surely this is as it should be. Dancing is not a suitable pastime for age; and the portly and decrepit who indulge in it have no regard for their dignity. Formerly, grandpa and grandmamma did not take the floor until the band struck up with "Sir Roger de Coverley," being content to sit on the side benches, admiring their grand-



children. An old gentleman is as much out of place in a foxtrot as on the cricket field.

Some time ago I was standing at the door of a ballroom with Admiral Sir Percy Scott, then a veteran of seventy.

"Don't you dance?" I inquired.

The old man cast a glance inside at the venerable couples who were prancing about in all directions.

"I'm not old enough yet," he replied. "I'll think about it in ten years' time."

In the arrangements for his New Year's ball Mr. Odell of the Europe Hotel had surpassed himself.<sup>1</sup> He had bought the presents and favours during a recent visit to Paris, as well as most of the garlands and festoons and coloured lanterns with which the room was decorated. The walls and ceiling glowed like an orchard in full blossom. Nothing more resplendent was ever seen at a gala night at Caunes or Monte Carlo. And the ladies received gifts of fans and wax dolls and large boxes of chocolates. How many hundreds of people dined and danced I do not know, but it is certain that the Filipino orchestra<sup>2</sup> was playing "to capacity." For this occasion only the police regulations were relaxed. Instead of terminating as usual at midnight the ball was allowed to continue until two o'clock in the morning.

This fondness for dictating to other people when they shall go to bed is a curious phase of the Anglo-Saxon character. It is prompted, of course, by the Puritan spirit of spoil-sport, which rejoices in all repressive legislation. At home we endured the full weight of its tyranny during the war, when it was a necessary evil, and we have not yet plucked up sufficient spirit to rebel and crush it. One does not expect, however, to find Puritanical regulations in a British colony. Moreover, such interferences are bad policy. Every one in Malaya is anxious to obtain a share of the tourist traffic, from which Java and Indo-China are

<sup>1</sup> From first to last I stayed in the Europe Hotel for twenty-six days, but I never spoke to Mr. Odell, so my testimony is unprejudiced.

<sup>2</sup> The natives of the Philippine Islands are accomplished bandsmen.

reaping, or will reap, large revenues, but the travelling public is not likely to be attracted to a country where the curfew bell is in active operation. In Singapore they get up no earlier in the morning than they do in Saigon and Batavia, although by order of the police they are sent to bed two hours sooner. And certainly they work no harder. All this is equally true of England, which is responsible for the bad example.

Since the war the Malay Peninsula has experienced hard times; but on New Year's Day, 1926, there were no signs of adversity. A "rubber boom" was in progress. The price of tin was high and likely to mount higher. The country had recovered from its misfortunes. Naturally, the people were gay and lighthearted in consequence, and the planter and the mine manager could afford to bring his womenkind once more at holiday time to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. And these cities were profiting exceedingly because of their visitors.

Sport of every kind flourishes in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. The golf-courses and tennis-courts are crowded at week-ends and in the evening. There are football and hockey clubs in all the towns. Probably, the best form is shown in Rugby football, and the leading clubs at home would find it difficult to beat a team chosen from the whole of Malaya. It is wonderful that the game is played so well on hard grounds in the heat of the tropics. A cup-final between Penang or Singapore or Kuala Lumpur attracts as huge a crowd as the 'Varsity match. Association football is popular too, and it is curious to watch a game on the Padang at Singapore in a temperature of eighty-five degrees in the shade while a cricket-match is taking place alongside of it. For cricket, however, there does not seem to be the same zest as there was fifteen years ago, in the days of the enthusiastic Sir Ernest Birch, then Resident of Perak. No doubt, every form of sport would be benefited if our English "summer time" were adopted; for it is always dark in these latitudes at half-past six, and another

hour would be gained for playing games by putting the clock forward.

Racing is in a prosperous condition, being patronized by the natives as well as by the Europeans, and there are successful racecourses at Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. Pride of place, perhaps, must be given to the New Year's meeting at Penang and the May meeting at Singapore, but the meetings in other towns draw enormous crowds, every room at the hotels being bespoken long in advance. The stakes are of considerable value and the horses of a high class. Some of the rich natives are enthusiastic owners. And, unlike the racecourses of North and South America there is no mud-track. Beautiful turf is one of the glories of Malaya.

Amateur dramatic societies are numerous, for they provide occupation during the long evenings. The choral society of Singapore, which seems to have exceptional talent at its command, has produced several operas. I saw the "Seremban Players"—who hail from Seremban, the capital of the state of Negri Sembilan—in a modern comedy which was acted admirably. The Singapore theatre, where the performance took place, has a fine auditorium, with seats set aslant in both stalls and circle so that every one has a view of the stage. There is an abundance of electric fans, and the whole of one side of the building is open to the air, leading into a courtyard where the audience can sit during the intervals.

The hospitality of the people of Singapore is embarrassing in its profusion. Nothing could be more kind than my welcome from every one to whom I had an introduction. It was not long before I discovered why the residents looked so healthy and were so healthy. Their avidity for all forms of exercise is not the main reason. It is because of the excellence of the food. Although cold storage is responsible for the exotic dishes in the restaurants of the hotels, the private houses can command a plentiful supply of fresh meat and poultry and vegetables of as good

quality as are obtainable at home. And a Malay curry is the best curry in the world.

The cuisine, too, is exceptional at the Singapore club, facing Battery Road. Here the visitor is cordially received and made a temporary member for the duration of his stay ; and here he can learn all about the country from the lips of Mr. J. D. Saunders, the genial president of the race-course, one of the celebrities of the colony.<sup>1</sup> The club has outgrown its present home and is going to remove into palatial premises at the top of the new Post Office, which is being built on the sea-front.

There is lavish hospitality, also, at Government House, where Sir Laurence and Lady Guillemard give balls and receptions and large dinner-parties constantly, besides entertaining a succession of itinerant guests. It is marvellous how they can spare time for all these social functions in the midst of the duties of administration. No Vicereine was ever more charming than Lady Guillemard, who is beloved by every one. Her fondness for riding and swimming and lawn-tennis adds to her popularity. Apparently, she never forgets a face nor a name, and is gifted with unfaltering tact. Personally, His Excellency, too, is very popular, but he lives in times of political stress, and has been the target frequently of hostile criticisms. The *Straits Times*, edited by Mr. A. W. Still, makes a hobby of trouncing him periodically, just as *Punch* used to belabour the Victorian politician ; but Sir Laurence Guillemard has a stout heart and a tough skin, and steers his own course undisturbed. Like one of the characters in a Gilbertian libretto His Excellency plays a dual rôle, for he is Governor of the Straits Settlements as well as High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States.

The elegant and the sordid are found cheek by jowl in Singapore. Behind the handsome public buildings a labyrinth of mean streets branches in all directions, where the Chinese population—more than three hundred

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written the sad news of the death of Mr. Saunders has arrived in England (January 1927).

thousand in number—are conglomerated. There is no separate Chinatown as at Saigon and the Celestial has spread himself over the centre of the city. Although no one could be more cleanly when in domestic service, John Chinaman cannot help making his own home into a pigsty, abominable both as regards odour and dirt. A stroll of little more than fifty yards from the Europe Hotel brings one into the midst of his squalid habitations.

For the most part the houses are of two storeys, the ground floor being usually a shop with dwelling-rooms upstairs, the windows of which are screened by latticed shutters. Every conceivable trade is carried on in these little shops, and a piazza often extends along the pavement in front as a protection from the sun. The streets swarm with rickshaws and bullock-carts, the latter being a replica of the Cambodian bullock-cart of a thousand years ago, drawn by two small oxen with humps on their backs. There are innumerable Ford motor-buses, always full of black and yellow men packed like sardines. The tramway, too, has wide ramifications and is patronized principally by natives.

Both the Tamil and the Chinese women act as beasts of burden, staggering along the road in vest and skirt or a suit of black pyjamas with a bamboo pole across the shoulders, at either end of which a bundle of firewood or a can of water is dangling, balanced like a pair of scales. Food stalls can be seen everywhere as well as numbers of travelling kitchens, where scraps of offal are fried in sausage fashion; and these never lack patrons, for the Chink appears to be always hungry. At the corner of the more important streets a Sikh policeman is stationed to watch the traffic, a black-bearded fellow with gay turban and khaki uniform. Sometimes the policeman wears a long and narrow strip of wickerwork strapped behind his shoulders, which he uses as a road signal. And if one happens to observe a lethargic brown person with velvetene fez and a plaid sârong who is watching other folks at work one may be sure that he is a Malay.

Most of the population, however, are Chinese. One might imagine oneself in Canton, judging from the people and their dwelling-places. Chinese hieroglyphics adorn the walls; nearly every shop is occupied by a Chinaman. He pulls the rickshaws and he drives the bullock-carts; he unloads the ships and is general odd-job man on all occasions. A wonderful fellow, indeed, with not an idle bone in his skin. When he does not work he sleeps or he eats, but usually he is working.

It is "peaceful penetration" with a vengeance, for he is twice as numerous as any other race in the Straits Settlements and equals the Malays in numbers in the Federated Malay States.<sup>1</sup> And in wealth he excels them all, for it is he who is the mainstay of commerce, being a usurer and a rigger of markets as well as the chief tradesman. The rich Chinaman—and his name is legion, of course—takes his share in local government and realizes the obligations of citizenship, but the labouring and trading classes have no political sense at present and no other aspiration but to make money. Which is fortunate, perhaps, else the Celestial might rule the roost throughout the Peninsula.

He is a peaceable, inoffensive, intensely industrious creature as a general rule; and when allowed to follow his inclinations the only vice that he has is smoking opium. If deprived of this solace he takes to drink, becoming then a most unpleasant and often a very dangerous fellow. Consequently, the government in its wisdom does not try to suppress opium, but seeks to control it instead in the same manner as alcohol, by licence. For the Chinaman harms no one by his propensity. He smokes a pipe at home or in the opium-den and goes off to sleep, awaking none the worse for the experience. The effect of the drug is not cumulative, nor does he require to indulge more im-

<sup>1</sup> The *Straits Settlements* include the islands of Penang and Singapore, the territory of Malacca, and two other small areas on the mainland. The *Federated Malay States* consist of four of the principal native states in the Peninsula. These latter are governed by a Mohammedan Sultan with a British adviser, like the native states of India.

moderately as time goes on. Unlike the drunkard, the habit does not grow upon him.<sup>1</sup>

The Chinese have one more hobby besides opium. On their New Year's Day—which is determined by the new moon in February—and at intervals for some days afterwards, they stay up all night letting off fireworks. There is a horrible din and the sleep of thousands of Europeans is disturbed, but the Chink has so few pleasures and he works so hard that every one forgives him for making himself a nuisance on these occasions.

Every Malay is a gentleman, even those of the lower orders. But he has no great love of work, nor is city life his proper existence. In Singapore and other large towns almost every chauffeur is a Malay, for it suits his dignity to be in charge of an automobile or a tram-car. He will condescend also to become a messenger or commissionaire or a policeman or a syce, acting in any capacity indeed where the duties are not too laborious. One meets with him often in a bank, usually in a subservient position. Despising the heathen Chinese and the barbarous Hindu, he believes that foreigners like these should perform the arduous tasks, while he, the lord of the land, should benefit by their labour. As a seaman or a fisherman he excels, so one sees much of him at the docks or in the harbour. In bygone days he was a most efficient pirate.

In late years his fondness for running amok has been less prevalent. It is a strange habit, having become a racial idiosyncrasy, no doubt, as the result of long years of cruelty and oppression. Its victim suddenly loses his temper, falling into a raging passion against the whole world. Snatching any weapon that he can find he attacks all that come in his path, hacking and stabbing without mercy, refusing to surrender, whatever odds are brought against him. His soul is ablaze with the lust of battle and he wishes to die fighting, striving to the last against his enemies. It is a species of egotism, owing its frequent

<sup>1</sup> An interesting novel upon the opium trade in Malaya, called *Cbandu*, by Owen Rutter, has been published recently.

repetition to the force of imitation. Sir Hugh Clifford and other writers, learned in Malay lore, have explained why running amok has ceased to be popular. To the savage mind it was glorious to meet death sword in hand in an ecstasy of madness. But it is quite another matter to be captured by the police, to be tried in a court of justice by English law, to be kept in confinement like a beast destined to the shambles, and finally to be hanged by the neck in a prison yard. This is not a romantic death at all, and friends and neighbours have not the least desire to emulate the example of him who meets with such a fate. So the Malay manages to keep his temper under better control. "Mengamok" is going out of fashion.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE SINGAPORE MUTINY

IN February, 1915, when the Great War was six months old, it must have seemed to the people of England that Singapore was one of the most secure and invulnerable seaports in the British Empire. Every one knew that now the *Emden* was destroyed, no danger could come to our colonies in Asia from German battleships. It was obvious that the Straits Settlements were too remote for an attack by submarine or air-craft. The native population of Malaya was happy and docile and amenable, never having shown the least discontent with British rule for many generations. Consequently, it came as great shock to the English people when they learnt that a serious mutiny had broken out in Singapore.

The truth was that no city could have been more defenceless and insecure, because none was less prepared to deal with a hostile eventuality. The island had been denuded of British troops. A large proportion of its white population, the best and most vigorous of the young men, had gone home to fight for their country. The English that remained were overwrought and disorganized, since one man usually was doing the work of half a dozen. And, although none of those in authority were aware of the menace, the enemy was carrying on a persistent propaganda amongst the native races of Malaya by means of spies, who conducted their operations close at hand in the convenient Dutch islands of Java and Sumatra. Moreover, one of the most efficient of the German Secret Service was a member of a firm in Singapore, itself, a certain Herr

Diehn, the manager of Behn Meyer & Co., a German shipping warehouse.

There was a graver danger still, for Singapore had been left to the care of a Sepoy regiment, the regular garrison of the island consisting of a battalion of the Indian Army—the Fifth Light Infantry—about a thousand strong. These soldiers were the only battle troops in the whole of the Peninsula. Recently there had been much secret dissatisfaction among them. The rank and file did not approve of the appointment of a newly-promoted native officer, and were displeased because they had been ordered to Hong Kong, whither they were proceeding in a few days. They had been disturbed also by the falsehoods of German emissaries, who had spread the rumour that their ship would be scuttled in the China Sea. But there was no outward and visible sign of insubordination, and the actual condition of the regiment was not revealed until much later.

Certainly, if the notion of a rebellion of the native soldiery had crossed the mind of the G.O.C. he would have felt the gravest anxiety, for he had but a handful of British troops to help him in a crisis. In the harbour was a gun-boat, H.M.S. *Cadmus*, that would supply about thirty bluejackets. Of the few Royal Artillery and Engineers on shore, less than 150 were available in an emergency, and besides these no regular forces existed in the whole of the colony. A small detachment of the Malay State Volunteer Rifles, raw recruits for the most part, who were in huts at Normanton training camp in the suburbs, were the only other white troops on the spot. Thus, in the event of conflict with the Sepoys, it was possible that the history of Cawnpore or Lucknow might be repeated. Even had there been any warning of what was going to happen during February, 1915, it would have been impossible to discover an immediate remedy.

The Fifth Light Infantry were quartered at Alexandra Barracks, between four and five miles from Singapore. Stationed previously at Nowgong in Assam, they had been

transferred to the Straits Settlements in April 1914. A fine body of men, recruited from the Mohammedans of the Eastern Punjab, their record was an unblemished one. Nevertheless, the English officers had not been a happy family for a considerable period, which naturally had demoralized the men.

About a mile from Alexandra Barracks was another cantonment, known as Tanglin Barracks, in the neighbourhood of which some of the German prisoners were interned within a barbed-wire enclosure. Until a few days before they had been in charge of a guard from the Fifth Regiment, but these had been replaced by some of the Singapore Volunteers. There were some R.A.M.C. orderlies also on duty in the hospital of the barracks, as well as a company of Malays belonging to the Sultan of Johore's forces. But the former were unarmed, and the latter, owing to some misunderstanding, had not been provided with their war complement.

The Chinese New Year—when the Chinese people all over the world give themselves up to feasting and fireworks for three consecutive days—happened to fall on Sunday, 14th February, and Singapore and its suburbs became uproarious with the explosion of crackers. On the following morning the Fifth Light Infantry were inspected for the last time by Colonel Ridout, the General Officer in Command,<sup>1</sup> after which they began to prepare for embarkation. Until now they had hesitated to revolt, but about three o'clock in the afternoon, when the small arms ammunition was being loaded on to motor-lorries at Alexandra Barracks, it dawned upon the ringleaders that the time had come to take action. It was their first and last chance of obtaining an adequate supply of cartridges. Suddenly a shot rang out, and in an instant five hundred black fanatics were running amok in the barrack square.

In a few moments the mutineers were triumphant. One swift volley put to flight the men who were guarding the

<sup>1</sup> Now Major-General Sir Dudley Ridout, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G.

magazine and the ammunition was captured. The officers who strove to quell the tumult were beaten down, and further resistance was impossible. A turbulent mob of Sepoys flocked around their leaders with loaded rifles, clamouring for orders, demanding what they were to do. All was babble and confusion for a time while the rebels were forming their plans; a valuable respite for the English colony.

Meanwhile a couple of English lieutenants had rushed down to Normanton Camp, hard by, where the Malay States Volunteer Rifles were in training, a detachment of a hundred men. Fortunately, these troops had plenty of ammunition, having been on shooting practice during the morning; and they marched up at once to defend the bungalow of Colonel Martin—the Commanding Officer of the Fifth Light Infantry—which stood on the outskirts of Alexandra Barracks. Making cover for themselves with ramparts of bags and boxes and piles of furniture, the gallant little band prepared to hold the position to the last.

In a little while the leaders of the rebels had arranged their plan of campaign. One party hastened to Tanglin Barracks to release the German prisoners. Another contingent went off to deal with Colonel Martin, who they imagined would be an easy prey. And the rest of the battalion dispersed in various directions, some visiting the neighbouring villas and shooting every white man at sight, others lying in wait along the roadside, sniping the motor-cars that passed by. The sound of rifle shots resounded through the suburbs, but those who heard them imagined that the noise was caused by Chinese fireworks.

All was tranquil at Tanglin Barracks that afternoon. Some of the German prisoners were kicking a football about in their compound. A few persons were playing on the military golf-course, whose green slopes surround the barracks on every side. Every one else, except the guard, was taking the usual rest after tiffin. Colonel Ridout himself, who lived in a bungalow close by, had a touch of

fever and had gone to his bedroom for a siesta. Suddenly, he was called to the telephone. The unhappy Colonel Martin had rung up from his bungalow at Alexandra Barracks with the news that "the Fifth had risen." In an instant Colonel Ridout realized the full significance of what had happened. Scrambling into his clothes, he telephoned to Fort Canning to summon all available troops to assemble at the P. & O. wharf and set off in a car to Singapore to take charge of the situation. Before leaving he instructed Mrs. Ridout to telephone to the officer of the guard to send a guard up to the bungalow, although unaware as yet that his home was in any immediate danger.

At this moment a hundred rebels were creeping stealthily towards Tanglin Barracks, and the first intimation of attack received by those inside came with a volley that swept through the hospital. The only soldiers in the place, with the exception of the volunteers on guard, were the Malays from Johore, the unfortunate troops who had left their ammunition behind them. The sound of firing brought them out on to the verandas, and, although their officers tried to rally them, they were unable to offer any resistance, and broke and fled in all directions. With shouts of triumph the Sepoys swarmed into the Prisoner of War enclosure, embracing the astonished Germans, thrusting weapons into their hands. At the same time the hospital was invaded and all the R.A.M.C. on duty were put to the sword, while a yelling mob burst into the guard room and massacred three of the officers. Captain Love-Montgomery, the officer of the guard, was murdered while he was speaking on the telephone to Mrs. Ridout, and the poor lady heard the fatal shot at the other end of the line. Ten volunteer privates were killed also.

Most of the German prisoners were embarrassed by the success of the mutineers. Many of them were naval officers, and no German naval officer can tolerate the murder of a white man by a black, even though the white man is an enemy. Moreover, one of their own comrades had been

killed when the barracks were stormed. Although now free and provided with arms they knew that the chances of escape were infinitesimal. No doubt they believed also that the rebels must be vanquished sooner or later, and were loath to jeopardize their necks by taking part in an act of treason. So the majority refused to co-operate with the Sepoys, remaining quietly in their quarters. Probably they were influenced by the indomitable demeanour of Major Williamson, a surviving R.A.M.C. officer, who went among them at the risk of his life to advise them not to assist the rebels. A few adventurous souls, indeed, made their escape, but being unable to procure either food or shelter, they returned of their own free will in a few days. One of the prisoners, however, did not dare to await the course of events. The treacherous Herr Diehn, who had been interned for some time, was convinced that his elaborate espionage would now be revealed, and took flight as soon as the rebels had set him at liberty. Being able to speak the Malay language, and having an intimate knowledge of the country, he managed to find a boat to take him to one of the neighbouring Dutch islands, whence he succeeded in reaching Sumatra.

The non-resistance of the Germans was a great disappointment to the mutineers. They had expected that some of the officers would act as their leaders; and, if this had happened, it is possible that the British flag would have ceased to fly over Singapore. But it never could have happened under any circumstances owing to one insuperable obstacle. The Sepoy soldiers did not understand either German or English, while none of the Germans could speak a word of Hindustani! For once the sagacious Teuton had been guilty of an oversight. If the officers who were destined to serve in the East had been instructed in the languages of the East, it is possible that some of those interned at Tanglin Barracks might have accepted the overtures of the mutineers; and, if they had been able to do so, Great Britain would have had to pay a heavy price in blood and treasure.

Appalling though the scenes of horror had been at Tanglin Barracks, they were far surpassed by the atrocities that took place in the private bungalows and the public highways during that afternoon. For the cruel Sepoys wandered through the beautiful suburbs slaughtering every European whom they could find. Some were murdered as they lay asleep on the veranda; many were sniped on the road as they were driving to golf or tennis. Frequently there were women in the party, and, although usually their lives were spared, the men at their side were shot without mercy. But in one case no quarter was given even to a woman. A husband and wife were stopped in their two-seated car by some soldiers more brutal than the rest, and she, a pretty young bride, was shot through the heart. Within an hour fourteen unarmed civilians had been put to death. One man, however, saved his life by a pardonable lie. When held up by a party of rebels the usual inquiry "You English?" was put to him. "No, Irish," he retorted, and was allowed to pass on.

At the first intimation of the revolt most of the residents of the Tanglin district left for Singapore in car, gharry, or rickshaw. Yet there was no panic. Every one had a thought for his neighbour, and there were many splendid examples of unselfishness. Some obstinate souls, moreover, refused to believe that the outbreak was serious, resuming an interrupted siesta or proceeding with a game of tennis. Naturally, there were many narrow escapes, and the Sepoys often arrived at a house a few moments after the occupants had fled.

When the General Officer in Command had assembled his forces at the P. & O. wharf his heart must have been full of misgivings. Altogether he could muster little more than three hundred men—the bluejackets from H.M.S. *Cadmus*, the detachment of Royal Artillery and Engineers and a few newly-enrolled Volunteers. He could get no information about the detachment of the M.S.V.R. that had been caught unawares at Normanton Camp. He knew that the Johore forces were impotent

for the moment and that no allied cruiser could come to his help for several days. And he had less than a dozen British regular officers. Opposed to him were a thousand battle troops, a magnificent body of fighting men with unlimited ammunition, and there was a grave risk that they would receive reinforcements from the criminal population of the city. It was a desperate position, but the gallant Colonel Ridout was a soldier of rare skill and displayed the greatest resource and resolution. Posting his scanty forces at strategical points on the main roads in order to prevent the rebels from reaching the city he proceeded to call a *levée en masse*, appealing to every able-bodied man to come forward. Martial law was proclaimed at half-past six. It was decided also to withdraw all the women and children for safety into an inner zone or place them on to the passenger ships in the harbour. Owing to the vigilance of Major Thompson, the Provost-Marshall, there was no panic among the native population.

Having gained possession of both Tanglin and Alexandra Barracks, the Sepoys began to make their way across country towards Singapore, leaving a detachment behind to storm Colonel Martin's bungalow and exterminate the gallant Malay States Volunteer Rifles. The main body was reinforced by the ruffians who had been murdering civilians in the suburbs, but part of the battalion, nearly one-third, it is said, declined to continue the rebellion and returned to their quarters. Six hundred desperate men, however, remained in mutiny. Before long several large parties had succeeded in penetrating into the heart of the city by mingling with the crowds of unarmed natives in the roads; and one of these bands happened to encounter Major Galway and Captain Izard, two R.A. officers who were going to join their units, and murdered them in the street outside the Criminal Prison.

During the course of the afternoon the mutineers made a mistake that had an important influence upon the course of events. A small body managed to advance into Singapore as far as the Central Police Station, and their arrival



was not discovered until they had opened fire upon the Sikh sentries, one of whom was wounded. The Sikh is not one of the most even-tempered fellows in the world, and this outrage annoyed the whole police force exceedingly. Henceforth, they were inflamed by a deadly hatred against the rebels. There was no longer any danger that they would join forces with their fellow-Punjabees.

About the same time the handful of bluejackets, landed by H.M.S. *Cadmus*, under the command of Captain Marryat and Lieutenant Sloan, were sent into the country to reconnoitre. During their march they came across the dead body of Mrs. Woolcombe, the pretty young English lady, whom they found lying on a bank beside her husband ; and as they looked upon the piteous spectacle each sailor swore an oath to wreak a fearful vengeance. But their revenge did not come immediately. Since they were weak in numbers, Colonel Ridout had given orders that they were not to make an attack on Alexandra Barracks ; and so, after effecting their reconnaissance and preventing mutineers from advancing along Keppell Harbour Road, they had to return to Singapore without inflicting any serious punishment upon the enemy.

The other approaches to the city, Orchard Road and River Valley Road, were held by detachments of R.E. and R.A. with the help of the Singapore Volunteer Artillery and the Singapore Rifles, but for some reason or other the Sepoys made no general onslaught when darkness fell. The bait of Colonel Martin's bungalow continued to allure them and they concentrated all their efforts in order to overcome the resistance of the defenders. During the whole night, however, the guardians of Singapore were full of apprehension. No accurate information of the plans of the rebels had been ascertained. It was doubtful how strong they were or which district they would select for their next attack. The defenders were kept guessing.

Late in the afternoon an act of gallantry on the part of the Sultan of Johore, who had always been one of the most popular sportsmen in Malaya, aroused the greatest

enthusiasm amongst the English colony. As soon as His Highness heard of the mutiny he raised a detachment of the Johore military forces, and, marching into Singapore at their head, he placed himself at the disposal of the British Commander.

Meanwhile, Government House had been crowded with women and children, who, like Mrs. Ridout, were sent there for safety. Owing to lack of men it was possible only to picket the principal entrances to the park, so the residence itself had to be prepared to stand a siege, the occupants withdrawing to the second floor and the staircase being barricaded with chairs and mattresses. Sir Arthur Young,<sup>1</sup> the Governor, was a tower of strength from first to last, and both soldiers and civilians were cheered and encouraged by his bravery. His example helped to calm the fears of the frightened refugees. It was owing to his kindness and forethought that food was provided for his hungry guests. In council with Colonel Ridout and Admiral Jerram,<sup>2</sup> he assisted in arranging a general plan of campaign, and it was at his suggestion that wireless messages were sent to summon the French and Japanese cruisers in neighbouring waters. Admiral Jerram, who had been exposing himself to great personal risk in various undertakings ever since the mutiny began, had waived his rank and was acting as subordinate to the G.O.C. at his own request. Fortunately, however, no attack was made upon Government House during these vital hours of preparation. Evidently the mutineers did not realize the importance of capturing the position, the investment of Colonel Martin's bungalow at Alexandra Barracks monopolizing all their energies. From sunset to sunrise the siege continued, and all the while the building was swept by a hail of bullets. But the resistance of the M.S.V.R. was so effective that their opponents dare not venture to try to take the position by storm.

While these events were taking place an amateur army

<sup>1</sup> Sir Arthur Young, G.C.M.G., K.B.E.

<sup>2</sup> Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram, K.C.B., G.C.M.G.

was being improvised in Singapore. All through the night a mob of recruits was being schooled and instructed in the Drill Hall. Few of them had handled a modern rifle and their guns kept going off accidentally. But although the roof of the building was riddled with bullets no one was hit. All of them showed the greatest zeal; every one soon became more efficient. Before dawn the non-commissioned officers in charge had licked a few companies into shape, able to keep in line and march with some show of order.

On the morning of the 16th the indomitable Colonel Ridout decided to attack the mutineers in force. Most of them were concentrated at Alexandra Barracks, engaged in the siege of Colonel Martin's bungalow, for it was necessary to vanquish the detachment of R.S.V.R.'s in order to be free to move elsewhere. Although fraught with peril the British attack could not be postponed, or the Malay Rifles would be wiped out, and the rebellious "Fifth" would have made further onslaughts upon Singapore. The risk had to be taken, so all available forces were concentrated at Keppel Harbour under the command of Colonel Brownlow and marched through the beautiful suburbs towards Alexandra Barracks.

In all probability it was the most heterogeneous body of troops that a British officer has ever commanded—thirty bluejackets, one hundred and thirty regular Artillery, a detachment of Volunteers recently enrolled and the zealous band of armed civilians who had been transformed into a battalion in a single night. The valour of these untrained amateurs was amazing. They marched to the attack as joyously as to a football match. They did not waver when the bullets of trained marksmen began to whistle past their ears. They never flinched when their comrades were falling around them. Sweeping up the grassy slopes under heavy fire scores of portly business men, who had come to regard lawn-tennis as too strenuous an exercise and had never wielded a more deadly weapon than a golf-club, rushed to attack the Sepoys in their entrenchments, loading

and firing as inconsequently as they had done in the Drill Hall. Aided by the machine-guns of the sailors, they reached the Barracks and drove the rebels from their lairs, pursuing them from hut to hut, seeking a hand-to-hand fight whenever it was possible. In a short time the Sepoys had been driven away and dispersed, never to reassemble as a compact fighting force. It was a splendid victory, the triumph of European civilians against Asiatic warriors, in which generalship was the deciding factor. Colonel Brownlow, who had conducted the attack in such an efficient manner, must have been proud of his amateur soldiers.

The short and swift battle at Alexandra Barracks determined the fate of the Singapore mutiny. By this means Colonel Martin and the M.S.R.V.'s were relieved, which added a hundred effective soldiers to the British forces. The rest of the day was spent in reorganizing the little army. There was a chance still that the "Fifth" might rally once more and make a last desperate onslaught. But the arrival of the French warship *Montcalm* removed all danger, and several Japanese cruisers came to offer assistance a little later. Henceforth, the sole remaining task was to round up the scattered bands of mutineers that were wandering over the island. Many escaped across the straits on to the mainland to be tracked down in the forests of Johore.

No swift or brutal revenge was inflicted even upon the most guilty among them. All received an impartial trial and were defended by native lawyers. In every case the sentence was reconsidered by Colonel Ridout himself, the capital penalty being sanctioned only when the culprit was a ringleader or had participated in murder. Altogether forty rebels were executed. Except two who were hanged, all those convicted were shot in public in order to convince the native population that death was the penalty of mutiny. The ceremony took place in every case outside the Central Criminal Prison, huge crowds assembling to watch the spectacle.

The mutiny had been quelled so quickly that the

achievements of Colonel Ridout and his brave troops were never estimated as highly as they deserved. People at home, who were confronted with battle and murder on a larger scale, pointed out that the Sepoy rebellion was doomed to failure from the first and regarded the uprising of a thousand men as a small matter in the midst of world-wide warfare. Critics such as these did not pause to reflect what might have been. Although it is true that our Japanese allies might have supplied sufficient forces to crush the rebellion in a few days, a terrible disaster might have happened before this had been accomplished. But for Colonel Ridout and his little army the Fifth Regiment probably would have burnt a large part of Singapore to the ground and massacred hundreds of the European population. The moral effect of such a catastrophe upon the native races of India, Ceylon and South Africa may be conjectured. Perhaps it might have altered the whole course of the war. From these dreadful contingencies England was saved in a few hours by the men of Singapore.

It does not appear that their services have been acknowledged in any way whatsoever ; and yet the gallant fellows who marched through the open fields and captured a strong position in face of a withering gun-fire seem entitled to some sort of recognition. Since scores of the less worthy are plastered with decorations, won on the office stool, the heroes of Singapore surely ought to receive one medal to commemorate their valour !

All the ladies of the colony were marooned on the ships in the harbour for several days. In most cases their quarters were not uncomfortable, but some, who, owing to mischance, were herded with a crowd of native women and half-castes, had unpleasant experiences. Until the majority of the rebels had surrendered they were full of anxiety also for their menfolk, who were engaged in the dangerous task of rounding up the fugitives. When, at last, they were allowed to come ashore they returned to their homes with grave misgivings, fearing that irreparable damage had been done in their absence. Such appre-

hensions were entirely unjustified. In no instance did a housewife suffer any loss. None of her possessions were missing; every *ménage* was just as it was left. The Chinese boys had carried on as usual all through the mutiny—an amazing exhibition of loyalty to their employers.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MORE ABOUT SINGAPORE

**T**HERE are bedrooms with a variety of aspect in the Europe Hotel. Some face the Padang and the open sea, being airy but far from quiet, owing to the motor-cars which are parked below. Others look out on to the courtyard, where nothing can be seen of the life of the town. The remainder abut on to High Street, a shopping thoroughfare, along which a clangorous tramway is functioning from early morning until late at night. Thus, every room has its disadvantages.

There is a curious feature about all these bedrooms. Each has a bathroom attached, but it is not adjacent, being situated either on the floor above or the floor below, and one has to ascend or descend to it by a narrow stairway. The bath is of tin—the round flat shallow arrangement of our grandfather's—which stands on a zinc floor. A Java jar of earthenware, as huge as one of the pantomime properties in the "Forty Thieves," provides the water, and a notice announces that it must be used as a cistern of supply and not as bath-tub. The can on the shelf above is meant for sluicing purposes. In the Malay Archipelago you are expected to clean yourself by pouring water over the head, a futile method, for, as the little boy remarked, one does not get into the corners.

Another odd feature of the Malayan bedroom is the "Dutch Wife," a species of bolster, that is supposed to lull you to slumber when you embrace it. Even small children have their miniature "Dutch wives," and cannot go to sleep without them. Some travellers find the thing a

comfort, but I could not abide it, kicking my "Dutch Wife" out of bed every night. The "boy," however, would not take the hint, and each evening the abominable contrivance was replaced on the mattress. In vain, I threw it on to the top of the wardrobe or into the passage. It was sure to come back again. Finally, I hurled it into the yard, but the indefatigable Chinaman retrieved it once more; and, as I could not speak his language, and pantomime seemed of no avail, I gave up the unequal contest. It would be as easy to banish the little lizards that run about the walls in chase of flies as to exclude the "Dutch Wife" from a bedroom in the Malay Peninsula.

Fortunately, the nights in Singapore are comparatively cool, and there is often a breeze. The rain too helps to cool the atmosphere. A day seldom passes without a few showers, some of which may develop into a tropical deluge. The brightest of blue skies will cloud over in a few moments, and a fierce rain squall beats up from the west, known locally as "a Sumatra." It is because of this consistent rainfall that Malaya is the most suitable region in the world for the growing of rubber. Nevertheless, there is abundance of sunshine, and a portion of the day is fine as a general rule, the mornings for the most part being delightful. Of course the temperature is high. On the 26th of February, for instance, the maximum was 89° and the minimum 76°, while in the sun the thermometer rose to 154°.

Although there is a considerable din in Singapore, owing to the number of cars, it is a far more tranquil city than Saigon. Stern measures have been adopted to abate street noises. The immoderate hooting of horns is discouraged by the police, offending chauffeurs being fined heavily. It is to be hoped that the authorities will turn their attention in the next place to the noisy tram-cars, which should not be allowed to traverse the principal streets. Since they are patronized wholly by the natives there can be no necessity for them to invade the European



quarter. Apparently, the penalties incurred by a drunken driver are just as severe as those at home, and are enforced more rigorously. During my visit an Englishman was sent to prison for three months for knocking down a policeman with his motor-cycle. In all towns that contain a large native population, who never can be taught the principles of "safety first," such punishments are a necessity.

At present, the city lacks an adequate service of taxicabs. Those in use are insufficient and decrepit, and cannot be summoned from the ranks by telephone. A new rate of charges, registered by taximetre, should be established. The existing system encourages the extortions of private garages, run by the hotels. If you require a car to go out to dinner you have to pay three dollars (seven shillings and sixpence) for a distance of half a mile, or—counting by time—for a drive of five minutes. On the return journey the same rapacity has to be endured, although in London the double fare would not exceed a florin. In comparison, other charges are not exorbitant. The price of a good room, *en pension*, at either of the leading hotels, varies from a pound a day to thirty shillings.

On the whole the cost of living is about the same as in England. Labour is cheaper, but used more extravagantly, and rents are on a higher scale. Still, the absence of custom duties encourages moderate prices, while most of the products of the country, owing to the industrious Chinese, have not become expensive. The tendency, however, is towards inflation; even the Chinaman, instigated by the tin and rubber boom, demanding higher wages. In a recent tailors' strike the employers had to surrender after a stoppage of six weeks.

The shops in Singapore, situated in High Street or in the neighbourhood of Raffles Place, charge little more for their goods than similar shops in London. There are some first-class English chemists; the Kodak Company has a branch here, and there is an enterprising bookseller who

supplies all the latest publications. Suits of linen or drill, as well cut as those made in Savile Row, and at a tenth of the price, can be procured from the Chinese tradesman. The great emporiums obtain most of the European custom. Little and Robinson and Whiteway-Laidlaw, all have large establishments on the model of Harrods', and are "universal providers." John Little's, which advertises itself as "the finest Store East of Suez," contains a spacious tearoom and is a popular meeting-place in the afternoon.

The Straits Settlements appears to be a paradise for a young man, as long as he remains a bachelor, for he starts with a "living wage" of £600 a year, and has free lodgings very often provided by his firm in a pleasant villa in the suburbs along with two or three other apprentices. In a communal habitation of this kind he can live far more economically than by himself, usually being able to share a car with his colleagues. Of course part of his salary must be set aside for the periodical holiday in England; but, as his employers pay his passage home, he has an ample margin to live up to the standard expected of an Englishman. It is a costly standard, no doubt, for a young man must play games and make regular appearances at the public dances. Also, a good deal of hospitality is expected of him. However, on the whole, he is more affluent than he would be in a similar situation in London. What the future has in store naturally depends upon himself, but there are prizes to be won in Malaya just as in Europe.

Many untruths have been told about excessive drinking in the British possessions in the tropics. There are tipplers everywhere, even in the United States, but they are no more numerous in southern Asia than in other places. Thirst is more difficult to quench in a hot country, and drink is less injurious in a climate where every one perspires freely. Before luncheon and dinner there is a large demand at the clubs and hotels for a gimlet or a gin pahit; and the inevitable stengah—or a small whisky

and soda in other words—is a universal *apéritif*. As a general rule the residents drink nothing but water at meals, so they are entitled to some license between times.

Besides the nightly dances at the two principal hotels there are few public amusements in Singapore for English people. A performance at the theatre takes place at rare intervals, and the cinemas are unattractive. The natives, on the other hand, are well catered for. On the outskirts of the city an open-air exhibition—called “The New World”—is run for their benefit on the lines of Earl’s Court, and the man from Cook’s insists upon taking his clients to visit the place. It is well worth a visit, for the enlightenment it affords into native life, especially in the evening. The exhibition, which covers a space of several acres, is crowded with stalls where inexpensive commodities are to be purchased. At one of these I observed a display of cheap thermos flasks, a popular article, no doubt, with the Chinese gastronome. Obviously “The New World” is patronized largely by Chinamen, since there are so many refreshment booths.

But the chief attractions for foreigners as well as natives are the various dramatic entertainments. The visitor comes upon one of these immediately he has passed through the turnstile, a show that is placarded as a Javanese comedy. It took place in an open kiosk with a thatch on top, the replica of an ordinary bandstand, and the spectators assembled around the rails outside to watch it. Within, high up in the roof, a cluster of electric lights cast its radiance upon the actors. The orchestra sat in a circle upon the floor—a couple of drums, a phono-fiddle, a sonorous gong and a xylophone.

The development of the plot was leisurely and wholly incomprehensible to a stranger. Its heroine, a tragic young woman with a high-pitched voice, went through a series of slow contortions as she meandered to and fro with stilted steps, caterwauling at intervals. But her poise and balance were not ungraceful, and she made

wonderful play with her arms, while her fingers, which were as flexible as reeds, vibrated like tiny serpents. She was dressed in a black gauze skirt and Turkish trousers, a broad blue sash encircling her waist. On her head she wore a silver turban with a long bead tassel. Another principal character was a comic man with purple cheeks and goggle eyes, produced by a mask of coloured indiarubber.

In a little while our guide hurried us away to a large booth, where one paid to enter, which enabled him no doubt to make a few cents for himself when he purchased our tickets. Inside we found ourselves in a spacious theatre with stage and footlights and scenery, where a Chinese drama was being enacted. The place was crowded, but we secured seats upon a wooden bench in one of the front rows of the stalls.

Most of the parts in the play were taken by children, the two leading ladies being represented by girls, who seemed about fourteen years of age. The faces of both shone with enamel, making them look like wax dolls, and they spoke in thin sing-song voices without modulation. Their dresses were gorgeous, magnificent embroideries worked in gold and silken thread, glittering in all the colours of the rainbow. Only two or three of the characters were adults, one being a comic policeman in command of a troupe of boys and girls who marched on and off the stage in single file incessantly. Apparently, the villain of the piece was intended to be Thanatos or the Devil, for he had a skull instead of a face, and persecuted the two little heroines without mercy. At last, one of the damsels retired up stage, and, with the assistance of her friend, seemed to give birth to twins, a couple of extremely wooden dolls being produced suddenly from nowhere in full sight of the audience. After this conjuring trick the mother was led off the stage in a state of exhaustion.

The next performance that we saw was a Malayan opera in a well-equipped theatre with an orchestra of European instruments. Although the music was not untuneful,

the voices of the singers were shrill like those of all eastern people. The story of the libretto was complicated, but not altogether incoherent. In the first scene a Malay gentleman dressed like Hamlet, but with a red fez, was having trouble in his harem, being obliged for some reason or other to command his favourite wife to commit suicide with a sword. Taking the weapon from his hands she appeared to acquiesce, and then, during a *tête-à-tête* of some length in which she played off all her wiles and coquetry, he was persuaded to forgive her. In the next act Hamlet and his courtiers sang a song in another apartment of the palace in praise of a rich cake, which one of the attendants carried aloft on a platter. The third scene represented a cavern full of black demons, who seemed harmless at first, but upon the appearance of Hamlet and his retinue they became exceedingly enraged and threatened the intruders with death. They were appeased, however, when the magic cake was produced, being tranquillized in a moment; and judging from the laughter of the audience, who were convulsed by their quips and cracks, they must have said a lot of funny things. The fourth scene took place in a street in the suburbs. Two dusky young women in Parisian frocks were brought on to the stage in rickshaws and talked interminably; but, as Hamlet did not appear again, and the story seemed to have run off the lines, we did not wait any longer. Throughout the play the acting had been admirable.

Another of the important sideshows of Singapore is the Chinese restaurant, where every traveller who is interested in the manners and customs of the East ought to take luncheon. Many of these are large establishments of three storeys with several commodious dining-rooms, patronized by opulent tradesmen. For English visitors, however, there is always a cabinet *particulier*, a small chamber with panelled walls carved and painted and gilded in Chinese fashion. An open window mitigates the odours of the eating-house.

The repast commences with green tea, brought in little bowls and then poured into cups, Virginian cigarettes and plates of red beans being handed round at the same time. For the first course at my luncheon party we had chicken Souey, composed of minced chicken, nuts and small pieces of a green vegetable, either melon or cucumber, a hot dish and most appetizing. The second course, which was just as good, was another Souey, no doubt, consisting of a farrago of rice, fish and prawns, accompanied by little plates of curry sauce with chutney, chilis and the usual concomitants. Everything was served in a set of pretty blue china. The chop-sticks were difficult to manipulate, but spoons and forks were provided for our benefit, and the waiter was helpful and deliberate, expatiating upon the virtues of each dish with enthusiasm. Generally, the Chinese boy at hotel or restaurant is a "plate-snatcher" of the worst kind, which is the reason, perhaps, why so many of the residents in Malaya eat quickly.

The restaurant was in the heart of Chinatown and the window of our room opened into a narrow street, which teemed and effervesced with Chinese humanity. Fat Chinamen, stripped to the waist and looking like so many Buddhas, watched from their shop doors with inscrutable expressions in patient expectation of customers. Busy little Chinese women in shiny black cotton pyjamas staggered along under appalling burdens, and crowds of small Chinese girls with long pig-tails danced and prattled and shrieked with laughter. Itinerant vendors passed along in swarms, carrying their stoves or baskets, and sometimes they would halt at a favourite pitch, squatting with their backs against the wall with their stock-in-trade beside them.

During the whole time that we were sitting at luncheon a Chinese orchestra was making a terrific din on the top storey of the restaurant. We went upstairs eventually to inspect and found the musicians in one of the larger rooms, a fine apartment with many open windows that were all framed with trellis work, ornately carved and painted. A

couple of vigorous young Chinese women were playing what looked like nigger bones while their two colleagues thumped a big gong and a xylophone of metal bowls. Our waiter escorted us to the kitchens, tiny places scattered in various parts of the building, where Chinese chefs, stripped to the waist, were achieving a maximum turnover with a minimum of material. In one room a youthful cook was painting cochineal on a board to colour the paste for his cakes before putting them into the oven.

In one of the suburbs of Singapore there is a dealer in wild animals, who supplies Hagenbeck of Hamburg, and his menagerie always contains some fine specimens. On occasions, the fiercest beasts of the jungle can be seen here, but at the time of my visit—on the day that I lunched at the Chinese restaurant—there was no elephant or rhinoceros or seladang in the collection. The last named is the formidable wild buffalo of the Malayan forests, a great horned creature with mammoth strength and the agility of a squirrel. But there were several tigers and leopards and black panthers, all trapped recently and very fierce, imprisoned in small pens, poor brutes, ready for shipment. One young tiger on a chain was as tame as a kitten, while three large orang-outangs seemed to have perfect manners. The birds, however, were the most wonderful things in the place—birds of every prismatic hue, birds of the brightest green and gold and blue and crimson, crested birds and tufted birds, birds with flowing tails and glowing plumage, parrots, cockatoos, hornbills and parakeets, birds with huge beaks and birds with spidery legs, ranged in cages side by side, a glittering spectacle of brilliant colours.

Naturally, the menagerie of a dealer cannot contain every beast and bird of a country, but a specimen of all the fauna of Malaya may be seen in the Raffles Museum in Stamford Road, half-way between Government House and the Cathedral. This collection is far more representative than those in the museums of Java and Indo-China, for

in addition to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field every creeping thing and all the fish in the sea are exhibited in the glass cases. To the casual visitor it is an absorbing exhibition ; to the naturalist it must be an elysium.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ISLAND OF PALMS

**I**T takes only twenty-four hours to go by train from Singapore to Penang, a distance of five hundred miles. The journey by sea occupies two nights and a day, for the boat makes a lengthy call at Port Swettenham, about half-way up the Malacca Straits. There is no comparison, however, in the comfort of the two routes and those who can spare the time prefer to travel by sea.

The voyage begins at Johnston's pier, Singapore, in a small launch amidst a herd of natives and a jumble of luggage, the only way at present of embarking on the coasting steamer that awaits its passengers in the Roads. My particular vessel was the *Klang*, belonging to the Straits Steamship Company, a branch of the Blue Funnel Line, the same boat on which poor Captain Macdonald was murdered by a madman a few weeks previously. It was lying about half a mile from the shore and, like all the steamers of this line, was a model of comfort and efficiency. One could imagine oneself on a private yacht, for everything is on a miniature scale, but the ship is more commodious than she appears, having thirty two-berth cabins. The food, attendance, and accommodation were all that could be desired.

According to tradition, the Straits of Malacca are never rough, and no doubt a liner of any size seldom rolls or pitches in these waters, but on the first night of my voyage to Penang there was sufficient sea to agitate the little *Klang* considerably. Most of the crew were Malays and there were many Malay passengers, a noisy lot of fellows

who seemed to grow noisier as the wind blew more strongly. Looking over the barrier into the steerage quarter at these vivacious brown men, I began to wonder whether the native was more prone to run amok in stormy weather. It was a consolation to reflect that since the recent tragedy every British officer on board these ships carries a loaded revolver. In a little while, however, the wind fell and soon the chattering Malays were all asleep.

Early next morning we entered the harbour of Port Swettenham,<sup>1</sup> a broad tranquil estuary, sheltered by a group of low-lying islands, overspread with trees to the water's brim that made them seem from a distance like patches of green velvet floating upon the sea. The ship ran alongside the quay, the railway station was close to the landing-stage, and soon after breakfast the train left for Kuala Lumpur, twenty-seven miles inland, a journey of about an hour. During most of the way we passed through rubber estates, which become a dreary spectacle after a time, but there were many pleasant bungalows to be seen surrounded by lawns and flower gardens, the homes of the English managers. The chief town *en route* is Klang, the residence of the Sultan of Selangor, situated in the midst of some of the most famous rubber plantations. All the stations along the line were neat and well kept, and that at Kuala Lumpur was a palatial structure indeed, as large and elaborate as the one at Brighton.

Kuala Lumpur, the capital of the state of Selangor, is the chief town in the Federated Malay States and the headquarters of the Federal Government. A small village thirty years ago it contains now a population of more than seventy thousand. In addition to the prosperous tin mines in the neighbourhood it is the centre of one of the most important rubber-planting districts in the Peninsula. Like all the newer towns of Malaya it is admirably laid

<sup>1</sup> Port Swettenham is named after Sir Frank Swettenham, one of the great pioneers of Malaya and an ex-governor of the Straits Settlements.

out, although perhaps it does not reach the French standard.

The Station Hotel forms the façade of the railway station with the offices of the Federated Malay States railway department opposite across a narrow square, both large and imposing edifices of Eastern design. More handsome still is the fine block of Government Buildings in the centre of the town, facing a spacious Padang, which serves as a cricket and football ground. Here, too, are the black and white premises of the Selangor Club—the world-famed “Spotted Dog”—and close at hand is a beautiful Malay mosque on the banks of the river amidst a garden of palm trees. Large European stores and warehouses are to be seen in every street, but the rest of the business part of Kuala Lumpur is a Chinatown, as supreme and predominant as in Singapore. Most of the English people live on the slopes of a little range of hills overlooking the Padang, where there are public gardens containing a picturesque lake with shady walks along its borders beneath tropical foliage. The pretty bungalows all around have wide views across the undulating landscape. Government House is close to the lake and a social club has its headquarters in the park. Not even in Singapore can one behold a more delightful suburb.

An exhaustive tour of Kuala Lumpur can be accomplished in a couple of hours and there is ample time for luncheon in the restaurant of the Station Hotel, which is on the level of the platform, before the train leaves to join the steamer at Port Swettenham. On arriving at the quay we found that the *Kinta*—sister ship of the *Klang*—was about to depart for Singapore with the Rugby football team that had won the States cup on the previous day on the Padang at Kuala Lumpur. A large crowd had assembled on the landing-stage to cheer the players on their way and there was much enthusiasm.

Leaving Port Swettenham at five o'clock in the afternoon the *Klang* had a calm voyage to Penang, which was reached soon after daylight. It forms part of the Straits

Settlements and is an island like Singapore, but smaller, being fifteen miles long and five miles broad. Its official designation is Prince of Wales Island. The town, which has a population of over a hundred and fifty thousand, although known colloquially as Penang, is called Georgetown. Our oldest colony in the Malay Peninsula, it was ceded to Great Britain in 1786 through the initiative of a sagacious ex-naval officer, named Captain Francis Light, who acquired it for the East India Company.<sup>1</sup>

The view from the steamer as one approaches Penang is very lovely. The island is mountainous and from base to summit all the hills are covered with trees. Along the shore the broad stretches of yellow sand, strewn with rocky boulders and broken into little coves, are fringed by groves of coco-nut palms. The harbour comes into sight suddenly around a headland, and swarms with a quaint medley of Chinese junks and Malay fishing craft. The bright red roofs of the town cluster close around the water's edge, a tall campanile rising from the midst of them. Behind, the crest of Penang Hill, the loftiest peak in the island, towers into the blue sky.

Both of the principal hotels have a delightful position on the sea-front with lawns and terraces on the edge of the shore. The "Eastern and Oriental" is the larger of the two and the apartments overlooking the beach have beautiful views of the coast. It happened to be full at the time of my visit and the only accommodation left was in the annex, a dismal place with dingy rooms and steep staircases some distance away down a dusty lane. So I took up my abode at the Runnymede Hotel, where the garden is shaded by palms and rain trees and enclosed by a sea-wall, against which the waves are always rippling. Constructed in bungalow style, with one-storeyed buildings spread about the grounds, it is an excellent hotel in every respect.

<sup>1</sup> In spite of his services to his country there is no mention of Francis Light in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.



TIENTSIN HARBOUR



TIENTSIN



One city in Malaya is very like another. Penang has its banks and warehouses, big stores and fine government offices, its business quarter resembling those of Singapore or Kuala Lumpur. The greater portion, too, is Chinatown, for here as elsewhere the Chinese outnumber every other race; but it is a Chinatown that is more flamboyant and emphatic than usual. Many of the Chinese houses have most gorgeous exteriors with carved and gilded doorways and panels of painted frescoes on the walls and groups of coloured statuary. There is an uncommon splendour even in the rickshaws, which are adorned with gold and silver lacquering, bearing glittering pictures of parrots and pheasants or garlands of roses. The ox-waggons also are more noticeable, for, although they are the same Cambodian carts which one sees everywhere, the long straight horns of the little humped oxen are painted brilliantly, usually in green or red, and the points of the brass-tipped horns are ornamented with pink or yellow tassels.

Prince of Wales Island is the beauty-spot of Malaya, excelling the island of Singapore, and is even as lovely as Ceylon. Rich forests clothe the high hills and fill the long deep ravines. Beaches of golden sand are lapped by a calm blue sea. Green meadows sweep around the base of the mountains and meander through the valleys. In the lowlands everywhere there is an overwhelming luxuriance of palm trees.

The tour of the island, a drive of forty-four miles, is the conventional excursion, and displays a wonderland of diversified scenery. Beyond the town the road follows the coast, passing through a dense entanglement of coconut plantations. Between the waving fronds there are glimpses of a gleaming summer sea—of the brightest blue at one moment and an instant later changing to the most vivid green—which breaks in ripples of foam upon the smooth yellow shore. Wooded promontories stretch out into the waves; black granite rocks are piled here and there upon the sands. Farther on, the highway traverses a broad

plain of rice-fields, dotted all over with groves of the ubiquitous palm.

Then the land becomes more undulating, and, climbing a little, we arrive in a region of orchards and rubber plantations, but the sea still flashes into sight now and then through a network of foliage. The ascent grows steeper, and the mountain slopes are clad with forest trees, while one gazes far down into steep verdant gorges that are reminiscent of Madeira. There are sounds of rushing water all around. Foaming cascades splash down from the rocks; clear sparkling streams sweep along the side of the road. Through the long ravines there are distant views of the sea.

Descending gradually from the uplands we approach another wide vista of rice-fields, interspersed by an exuberant growth of palm-trees; and upon reaching the plains we are among the coco-nut plantations once more. Native huts become more numerous, slight wooden erections with a thatch of leaves, and often there are whole colonies of them. Little bare children scamper in and out of the doorways. Flocks of geese cackle in every compound. Stacks of copra are piled beneath the trees. Great bushes of hibiscus line the roadside. They are picturesque folk, the people of these villages, for they love bright shades, unlike the Chinaman of the towns whose clothes are always sombre. Most of them are Tamils, the men handsome black fellows who are stark naked except for a crimson loin-cloth and a crimson turban. The women, too, are attractive creatures in their snow-white jackets and gay-coloured petticoats. The Malay male also can be seen along the road, dressed in a linen or khaki coat and a plaid sarong and wearing a velvetenez fez, for being a Mohammedan his head-dress must not prevent his forehead from touching the ground.

There are many beautiful drives in Penang to many curious and beautiful places. Four miles inland is the famous Chinese temple of Ayer Hitam, built in a series of terraces on a hill slope, having a pool filled with tortoises



and goldfish on every tier, and innumerable pagodas rising one above another, each containing a resplendent Buddhist shrine. Another temple is called the Snake Temple, taking its name from the snakes that infest it, for there are scores of them creeping over the altars or entwined upon the screens, drawn hither no doubt by instinct, because they are fed. A third excursion through three miles of pretty suburbs brings one to the Waterfall Garden, an exquisite dell nestling at the foot of the mountain, with shrubberies of tropical trees and banks of exotic flowers, where there is a cascade tumbling down from the hilltops.

The ascent of Penang Hill, which is over two thousand feet above sea-level, used to be made in chairs carried by coolies. Now one can reach the summit in a Funicular Railway. Numerous villas have been built upon the slopes, and more will follow now that communication is easy, for the air at the top of the hill is ten degrees cooler than in the plains. The best position upon the crest of the mountain is occupied by the Governor's bungalow, which Sir Laurence Guillemard visits at the time of the New Year's race-meeting and entertains a large house-party. The Crag Hotel, a comfortable hostelry that is to be reconstructed on a larger scale, is situated a little distance away. There is an incomparable view from the top of the hill. Broad expanses of forest sweep down and are merged in the orchards and coco-nut plantations of the valley beneath. The woodlands extend to the margin of the sea, and there is a vivid patch of colour at the point of a triangular headland, where the red roofs and white walls of the city are gleaming far below in the sunshine. Beyond, a smooth and narrow channel divides the island from Province Wellesley on the mainland. In the distance when the day is clear the blue peaks of Kedah, a range of lofty mountains on the north-east, can be discerned through the haze across vast regions of rice land.

The European quarter of Penang lies on the western

side of the city in the neighbourhood of the racecourse. Here is the Residency and also the Government House, to which His Excellency can descend when he grows tired of his hill-station. Most of the private villas in this district would be regarded as mansions at home. On the ground floor, usually, a spacious hall opens *en suite* into a lounge, a billiard-room and a dining-room, while the drawing-room above occupies the whole length of the second storey. Deep shady verandas surround the building. Some fine Chinese houses also are to be seen, not so ornate as those in the town, but of Oriental conception nevertheless, with a row of immense Chinese lanterns as a general rule hanging in the porch. The wealthy owner lives very often with his family in the kitchen. Throughout this charming suburb there is abundance of shade, splendid avenues having been planted along many of the roads. Close at hand, too, there are extensive avenues of palm trees, a favourite resort of riders in the early morning.

The most beautiful, perhaps, of the many beautiful gardens in Penang is to be found at the Residency. Its charm is enhanced by its position, for it is situated at the base of Penang Hill, and has the mountain slopes as a background. Smooth, wide lawns, covered with groups of palms and clusters of tall bamboos, encircle the house on every side. Great splashes of purple and crimson blaze from bushes of bougainvillæa. There are graceful rain-trees and cool green shrubberies to provide shade.

At the time of my visit the Resident was the Hon. W. Peel, who has been transferred since to the important post of Chief Secretary of the Federated Malay States at Kuala Lumpur. Both Mr. and Mrs. Peel delight in hospitality, and I was present at one of their large garden parties. There was much lawn-tennis, of course, for the best tennis courts in the colony are on the lawns of the Residency, and the standard of play reached a high level. If some of our leading amateurs could be weaned from the Riviera and persuaded to visit Malaya occasionally, it is

probable that the Peninsula would produce a real champion in the course of time, since, owing to the excellence of the grass, the game is played under the best conditions. At present good coaching cannot be obtained, and there are no first-class models to copy.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### TIN

THE railway station at Penang stands on the quay, and here one can book a ticket for any town in the Peninsula between Singapore and Bangkok.

A launch takes the passenger across the straits to Prai in Province Wellesley on the mainland, where the journey by train begins.<sup>1</sup> There is a beautiful view of the Penang hills when the boat leaves the harbour.

As one travels southward the country is flat and monotonous, a succession of paddy fields and coco-nut plantations. Long stretches of swamp appear now and then with a thick growth of water-lilies upon their surface, where ugly black water-buffaloes are always wallowing in the mud. The bushes along the side of the line bear a pretty orange wild-flower entwined among clusters of mauve convolvulus. All the railway stations are bright with flower-beds and busy with chattering natives.

My destination was Taiping, the capital of the State of Perak and the seat of the British Resident, a journey of less than three hours from Penang. It is an attractive town with a meandering lake in its midst, strewn with verdant little islands and encompassed by a beautiful park. Jungle-clad mountains tower four thousand feet above the valley, their crests often buried in the clouds; and a European climate can be enjoyed in the bungalows on their heights where roses grow in the gardens and the nights are cold enough to make a fire necessary. The

<sup>1</sup> Province Wellesley, one of the Straits Settlements and a Crown Colony, is a strip of territory forty-five miles long by eight miles broad, carved out of the non-Federated Malay State of Kedah.

grounds of the Residency slope towards the head of the lake, and there is a cricket ground with excellent turf a little farther along its shores. Naturally, owing to the proximity of the hills, the district has a heavy rainfall. Those who bring suitable introductions will spend many agreeable days at Taiping, for one can have sport of every kind, and wonderful expeditions may be made into the mountains. In the season there is good snipe-shooting in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the place was under a cloud during my visit owing to the illness of Mr. Oswald Stonor, the popular Resident.

In 1875, Mr. J. W. W. Birch, the first Resident of Perak, was murdered in a foul and cruel way by some of the Malay chiefs who were hostile to the policy of the British Government. A punitive expedition had to be despatched, and battles were fought before the country was tranquillized. Thirty-five years later the son of the ill-fated victim of native revenge completed his term of office as Resident of Perak. Every Malay in the State had loved Sir Ernest Birch; all were filled with grief because he was going to leave them. Each regarded his resignation as a personal loss; for weeks before he went away a deep melancholy had fallen upon the whole native population. And, at last, on the day of his departure the streets of Taiping were thronged with sorrowing crowds come to bid him farewell—and they were the sons and daughters of the men who had killed his father. It is a fine testimony to the virtue of British rule that the spirit of a proud and warlike people can be changed in such a manner during a generation. The story of the two Birches will always be appropriate whenever it is necessary to controvert the dogmas of the little Englander. It is typical of the results of our treatment of native races.

There are two rest-houses in Taiping, one being indifferent, the other execrable. It was to the latter, presumably, a building in the Station Road, that I was taken by my taxi-driver, and I was glad to be rescued from this unpleasant habitation by the man who had promised

to meet me. The friend in need was Mr. Naish, the manager of the Kamunting Tin Mine, who gave me luncheon at the Perak Club, which is close to the lake and overlooks the cricket ground. My chief object in coming to Taiping was to see a tin-dredger at work, and, as Kamunting is only a few miles away, I was able to arrive there during the same afternoon. It has a pleasing situation at the base of lofty mountains, covered with forests, but it seems to be always raining. There are detached villas in pretty gardens for the staff, who are all Australians or New Zealanders. Every visitor receives a hearty welcome.

For scores of years the ground in the Larut Plain has been worked for tin by the Chinese, who are born miners. But they only succeeded in scratching the surface, and, as the metal extends to comparatively low levels, they took away a mere fraction, leaving most of it behind. The land is now being dredged upon the sites of the old workings, the soil being turned over and sifted to a depth of eighty feet, if necessary. A chain of buckets, driven by a high-power steam-engine, is the method that is employed.

Before the dredger can be erected it is necessary to make a large pond. When the earth has been excavated to the depth required through the metal-bearing strata, the cavity is filled with water, and a wooden pontoon is floated on the surface. This raft is a ponderous structure, for it must be strong enough to carry a steel boiler, working at a hundred and fifty pounds' pressure, and a powerful compound steam-engine to drive the endless chain of buckets which dredge up the wet soil. Scooping out the bank of the pond from top to bottom the buckets emerge from the water full of liquid mud, which is emptied into sluices where the metal remains, while the débris flows out in channels at the back of the pontoon. Thus, cut away in front and filled in behind, the pond is always moving onward, bearing the dredger with it, and the land through which it travels is rifled of its tin. A dredger is an expensive piece of mechanism, costing £50,000. There are



BRIDGE, KAMUNING, TIN MIN





three of these machines at Kamunting, and a fourth, which is a suction-cutter, has proved a failure.

The manager took me to see the newest of the dredgers, and to reach it we had to cross the muddy pond in a little iron punt, which seemed most unsafe. When we stepped from the boat we appeared to have entered a large factory, for the place was three storeys high and filled with machinery. It is roofed all over, and the sides are enclosed to protect the plant from the rain. Steep ladders and narrow pathways had to be traversed amidst whirling wheels and a network of leather-belted. Coolies were standing kneedeep in the shallow wooden channels into which the revolving buckets tilted their burden of alluvial soil, stirring up the muddy stream with rakes. The sand and water flow along the sluices, which carry them far away on to the dry land. The tin, intermixed with its alloys, remains behind. It is a process of gradual sifting, after which the residue is carried ashore for further treatment.

Having seen all that there was to be seen on board the dredger we made another perilous voyage across the pond to visit the sheds where the ore is separated from the alloys. It comes from the dredger in the form of thick black mud, and is placed at first in a range of troughs made of concrete. The natives lift it out in sieves, washing it with care and skimming off the scum of sand deftly from the top until what is left contains almost seventy-five per cent. of pure tin. When this final cleansing and sifting is finished the damp ore is dried in a large perforated iron cylinder over a wood fire, percolating through the holes as it becomes dry in the form of black dust resembling gunpowder. It is then weighed and packed in bags, the sides of which are laced with string to prevent wastage of material, after which it is ready to be smelted. At the time of my visit there were bags containing £5000 worth of ore, waiting to be despatched to the Eastern Smelting Company. The life of the Kamunting mine is said to be at least twenty years.

Every one who travels south, as I did, from Taiping to Ipoh, should use a motor-car, for the road between the two towns—a distance of seventy miles—passes through some of the finest scenery in the Federated Malay States. For the most part it is jungle, the highway in some places traversing a narrow tunnel cut through the forest, and then it rises to heights which look down upon vast expanses of waving treetops. The country is mountainous all the way, and precipitous cliffs, swathed with foliage from base to summit, rise up abruptly from the roadside. At one part of the journey the car crosses a splendid reach of the Perak river, spanned by a pontoon bridge which sways and undulates most alarmingly whenever a vehicle passes over it. Apparently, the natives in these districts are prosperous folk, for their herds of goats and water buffaloes may be seen on every patch of grass-land.

Close to the great river lies the Malay capital of Kuala Kansar, a little town of handsome bungalows in the midst of gardens. The reigning Sultan of Perak resides here, and there is a house for the High Commissioner.<sup>1</sup> Here, too, there is a residential college on the model of an English public school, in which the sons of Malay chiefs and princes are educated. Those who know them well declare that the young Malays of gentle birth are the most charming natives in the East. It was unfortunate for me that I was unable to break my journey in this pretty and interesting town, where one can observe so much of Malay life and character in its best phases. One can gain no knowledge of these people in large cities like Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Ipoh, the business centre of the State of Perak, is a town of considerable size, built within the last twenty-five years. It has a large Station Hotel similar to that at Kuala Lumpur, which is clean and comfortable and seems a paradise after the rest house at Taiping. Close to the

<sup>1</sup> As explained previously the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States is that Gilbertian person, who is also Governor of the Straits Settlements—  
“two gentlemen in one”

government offices there is a Memorial Clock Tower, erected to the memory of Mr. J. W. W. Birch, the first Resident of Perak, who was assassinated. A bridge that spans the Kinta river is named after his son. The place owes its prosperity to tin and rubber, especially to the former, for the Kinta valley, in which the town lies, contains some of the most important tinfields in the Peninsula. Social life is pleasant, here and there are many things of interest to be seen in the neighbourhood. The club is good and there is a prosperous racecourse. The Resident of Perak lives alternately at Ipoh and Taiping.

The reason of my sojourn at Ipoh was in order to inspect the Ipoh Tin Dredging Company, whose property is situated at Lahat, about eight miles away; and the morning after my arrival I drove out to see it. Throughout the Kinta valley the hills are more distant than in the neighbourhood of Taiping, the district in consequence having a less persistent rainfall. It is a desolate part of the country, strewn with tailings from the mines, honeycombed with pitholes and overgrown with a coarse, thick scrub. There were long stretches of rough sandy roads to be traversed before we reached the mine, and the driver of the car lost his way repeatedly.

At last we arrived at the headquarters of the dredging company, a few small bungalows and a collection of native huts amidst a palm grove, close to the railway line. There were sheds for the treatment of ore, and not far away the chimney of one of the dredgers was belching forth smoke. Only two of these machines have been erected so far, for the mine is a new one. The soil is richer in tin than at Kamunting, but it abounds in limestone boulders, which make extraction more difficult. Most of the staff were Australians, who are the pioneers of modern tin-mining.

The dredgers and the method of treatment were exactly the same as at Kamunting, so there was no novelty in the process, but close at hand was a small mine which was being worked by the Chinese in the primitive way.

The obliging manager of the Ipoh Company took me to look at it. An open pit sloped in a steep gradient to a depth of about fifty feet. Upon its margin and down its sides were long ranges of scaffolding, composed of tall bamboo tressels, bearing narrow pathways or a shallow wooden aqueduct. Busy coolies scampered across these swaying bridges like tight-rope dancers, carrying two baskets of black mud balanced at each end of a pole slung across their shoulders. Others were scooping up the alluvial soil at the bottom of the mine, picking the surface as carefully as a collection of fowls on a manure heap. Some were standing in the sluices, washing away the sand and gravel and sifting the ore to prepare it for the drying stoves. In this manner the Chinese have been digging up tin for countless generations. The only modern appliance on the spot was a steam-pump for keeping the mine dry. My cicerone informed me that this little excavation was a valuable property, yielding a large income to its proprietor. Although the methods of the Chinaman may be clumsy, there is no doubt that he "gets away with the goods."

Before leaving Malaya I was fortunate enough to be allowed to inspect one of the great smelting works, where the final process in the production of tin is accomplished. All the labourers are Chinese, and the elaborate precautions that have to be taken to prevent them from stealing the ore reminded me of what I had seen in the native compounds at the Kimberley diamond mines. Each man has to submit to a close scrutiny when he goes away from the premises, having to undress entirely and leave his working clothes in the charge of the overlookers, so that the little splashes of tin that adhere to the material may be collected. Every yard of the flooring is swept every day, and the small fragments of ore are gathered together. Since the metal is so valuable any carelessness in checking wastage would soon entail a considerable loss. A Sikh policeman with loaded rifle stands at each doorway. All the workmen live in houses owned by the company and

adjoining the works, which makes supervision an easy matter.

When the little bags of black dust arrive at the smelting works from the mine they contain about twenty-five per cent. of alloy, and it is the task of the smelter to eliminate all adulterations and extract the last thimbleful of metal. There is no weight of machinery to drive, for most of the plant is stationary, and the electric power required is obtained from the municipality. In the laboratories, which are controlled by English chemists, the specimens of tin are tested at every stage of the process, every ounce of slack also being examined to ascertain whether all traces of pure metal have been eradicated. If not, the slack is roasted once more.

In its original state the gunpowder-like dust is comparatively pure, containing as it does seventy-five per cent. of metallic tin. The work of smelting in Malaya is done for the most part in the furnace. Liquid fuel is employed, drawn in pipes from a central reservoir. There were numbers of these furnaces—of the reverberatory type—in the establishment that I visited, ranged along the centre of a large building, so that the place resembled an iron-foundry. The molten metal is run off into small floats or kettles of cast-iron, while the slag flows into the little ground reservoirs which are lined with clay in order to prevent the escape of any ore that may remain. For tin is an elusive metal and will percolate through most substances. Afterwards, the liquid tin is ladled out with care into ingot forms and allowed to solidify, the slabs when moulded having the appearance of silver with a slight blue or yellow sheen. Each smelting works, I was told, has its peculiar methods of treatment, the results of long experience, the essential object being to squeeze out every atom of tin as one squeezes an orange.

Tin-mining is the second most profitable industry in the Malay Peninsula, being exceeded only by rubber. The fields already known have a long life in front of them. Probably there are other tracts of ore-bearing country

still to be discovered. Since the price of the metal is likely to remain at a high level the prosperity of the tin-fields seems to be assured for many years. The industry also has the incomparable advantage of the assistance of the Chinaman, who not only provides efficient and economical labour for the European companies, but is able to produce a considerable output on his own account by working tiny scraps of ore from the tailings and abandoned workings of other people.



CHINESE WALLING ADJOINING THE HOUEI'N MINT





## CHAPTER XIX

### RUBBER

**A**T the end of my visit to the tin country I went by train from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur, having received invitations to stay at various rubber plantations. It is a journey of nearly seven hours, the line passing through an everlasting panorama of luxuriant verdure. Great ranges of hills, between four and five thousand feet high, and often lost amidst the clouds, run from north to south, and for scores of miles the jungle remains in its primeval state, much of it being given over to government preserves. The country resembles parts of Brazil in the neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro.

There was a typical instance of the invariable kindness of the people of Malaya upon my arrival at Kuala Lumpur. A friend had given me an introduction to a young Englishman, named Duncombe Seare, who was on the platform to greet me when I stepped out of my train. Being ignorant of the exact date of my visit he had taken the trouble to make inquiries at the Station Hotel, to which place, as he expected, I had written for a room. And having ascertained that there was no accommodation either there or at the Empire Hotel, he had come to meet me lest I should be left stranded.

"Of course, I would ask you to my place," said he, "but I am staying with my cousin for the week-end. So the best thing you can do is to come along with me. It's a two hours' run in the car."

A moment later, however, while we were arranging

which of my baggage to take and which to leave behind, the Chinese manager of the Station Hotel appeared with the news that one of his rooms had just become vacant. Accordingly, having an appointment on the following day, I decided to remain in Kuala Lumpur. All the same I was full of gratitude to the excellent Mr. Seare, who had been so solicitous for my comfort.

The Station Hotel at Kuala Lumpur is a palatial structure, and little fault can be found with the restaurant, which serves also as a buffet for travellers ; but the arrangement of the building is abominable. A wide corridor, which runs along the whole length of the second storey and is used as a lounge and smoking-room, forms a veranda in front of the bedrooms, and these in consequence have no windows open to the fresh air. Not only are they dark and ill-ventilated, but sleep is impossible when late revellers take up their pitch in the passage outside. If not too late, the Federated States railway department ought to deal severely with the architect.

Next morning, I had an unexpected visitor, a jocund and breczy stranger with a brown red beard. His name was David Freeman, one of the principal lawyers in Selangor, and, although I was unaware of the fact, a socialist candidate at the last General Election in England. He had heard of my arrival, and with the habitual courtesy of all Englishmen in the F.M.S. he had hastened to call upon me, knowing that we had several acquaintances in common. And he was good enough to say that he and his car were at my disposal indefinitely. Possibly, the rencontre had been manœuvred by mischievous people, who believed that our political differences were as antagonistic as those of Satan and St. Peter ; for some regard Mr. Freeman as a "Bolshie," while others have been known to label me as a "Die-hard" Tory. But he said nothing to give me the impression that he was "a humble disciple of Lenin," while I did not preach to him the gospel of Mussolini. Neither of us worried about the other's creed ; not a word of discord dis-

turbed our unanimity. We were like brothers. Which is another proof that human nature cannot be restricted to watertight compartments by means of political labels.

Mr. David Freeman was an excellent guide, and when I had spent an hour in his company I seemed to have learnt a great deal about Kuala Lumpur. Recently, the beautiful town had been visited by one of the periodical floods, which had engulfed the Padang and most of the streets in the business quarter, and its ravages were apparent still. We visited the lake and the gardens and the social club, and after a call at the "Spotted Dog," my host took me into the country to see what he regarded as one of the finest views in the neighbourhood. It was at a place called Klang Gates, some miles away, where the government intends to construct a reservoir. During the whole of the drive we passed through rubber plantations.

My companion had an intense admiration for the Chinese, many of whom were his personal friends. He considered that the English were responsible in a large measure for the unrest in China, having offended national sentiment persistently for generations. As an example, he told me that a Chinese gentleman of his acquaintance was denied admittance to the public gardens in Shanghai because of his race, although any common little Japanese prostitute was allowed to enter.<sup>1</sup> The same Chinaman acknowledged that his fellow-countrymen were ridiculous soldiers with no knowledge of warfare, but he added significantly "we are learning." Mr. Freeman expatiated on the virtues of the Chinese population in Malaya, declaring that they should have "a share in the government," but since he contented himself with general statements there was nothing to lead me to suppose that he desired the enfranchisement of the coolie. Having no notion of each

<sup>1</sup> There is a reason, I am told, for this prohibition. Without it, this particular park would be over-run by the Chinese, although they have parks of their own.

other's susceptibilities neither of us took any trouble to watch our steps, but we managed somehow to avoid treading upon one another's corns. Only once, and for a moment, did our talk turn to politics when we both agreed that Mr. Baldwin was "an honest man." The good qualities of the Chinese continued to monopolize our conversation, the greater part of which consisted of soliloquies by Mr. Freeman.

Upon arriving at Klang Gates we left the car and began to ascend the side of a hill amidst what seemed to me to be primeval jungle. It was difficult to force a way through the undergrowth while there were many unpleasant plants that twined tentacles around the ankles. Sometimes miry places had to be crossed, sometimes small landslides had left deep chasms in our way. It was an arduous climb and I was glad when we reached a small plateau. Here stood a derelict bungalow, formerly used as a rest-house, where, so my guide informed me, one of the former Governors of the Straits Settlements used to bring his lady friends for the week-end. The view repaid the trouble that we had taken to look upon it. A wide valley, buried in trees, lay some hundreds of feet below. A tall limestone crag, covered in places with tropical verdure, upreared its rocky head in the middle distance. As far as the eye could reach hills peeped over hills and mountain range succeeded mountain range, all overspread with forests, one vast expanse of compact greenery. The soil upon most of the highlands of Malaya is poor and thin and erosion follows the removal of the trees, so that it does not pay to clear away the jungle. In Java on the contrary the rich volcanic earth extends to the highest elevations, which makes the area of cultivation so much more extensive.

When we were approaching Kuala Lumpur about half-past one on our return journey the car turned suddenly into the grounds of an opulent villa close to the golf-course, and Mr. Freeman announced with customary Malayan affability that I must take luncheon with him.

His wife, who is a Burmese lady of high rank—one of two sisters famous for their beauty—gave me a gracious welcome. She was dressed in the picturesque costume of her country and spoke English without a trace of foreign accent. It was obvious that she was highly intelligent.

"Have you met any of the Malay ladies?" she inquired almost at once.

Regretfully I answered in the negative.

"Oh, but you must meet some Malay ladies. It would be absurd to leave the country without doing so."

I agreed that it would be a regrettable omission but unhappily I had no introductions.

"I will introduce you with pleasure. Many of the Malays are my friends."

"Where are the Malay ladies to be found?" I asked. "So far I have only seen the peasant women."

"There are plenty at Klang," replied Mrs. Freeman. "I will take you to their homes."

But for some reason or other unfortunately the visit never was arranged, and, although I was lucky enough to meet a Malay gentleman before my departure, I did not set eyes upon a Malay lady.

About this time I read a paragraph in the newspapers that seemed to suggest a gross miscarriage of justice from an English standpoint. It concerned a Malay peasant, named Majid, who lived at Klang, a few miles from Kuala Lumpur. In the belief that some children had stolen a toy belonging to his daughter he proceeded to put them to trial by ordeal to find out if they were guilty. Taking them one by one he dipped their fingers into boiling oil, scalding each of them severely. When the father of the youngest child went to remonstrate a fight ensued, in the course of which Majid stabbed the other man to death. Nevertheless, he was acquitted of murder when brought to trial, the evidence showing that he had been attacked by several persons and had drawn his knife in self-defence. The charge was reduced to manslaughter and a sentence

of only three months' imprisonment was imposed, which seems a lenient enough penalty for the double crime. It would be interesting to know whether Mrs. Freeman's friends at Klang—the Malay ladies who are always devoted to children—considered that the child torturer had received a suitable punishment.

Before leaving England it had appeared to me that it was a difficult matter to obtain permission to inspect a rubber estate. Having a considerable interest in the Linggi Plantations, which were beginning to pay a small dividend again after an interval of several years, I wrote to the directors asking to be allowed to visit one of their properties. But the answer was in the negative, the excuse being that if *every* shareholder made a similar request the managers would have no time to attend to their proper duties. Consequently, as it seemed improbable that the shareholders visited Malaya in large numbers, I had come to the conclusion that a connection with the rubber industry must create a churlish disposition. Nothing, however, is farther from the truth. Other directors upon whom I had no claim were kind enough to give me letters of introduction to their local representatives. Every manager of a rubber estate whom I met on my travels—and I made friends with several—invited me to visit his plantation. Thus, when I arrived in Kuala Lumpur on my return from the tin country, I had more invitations than I could accept.

Kuala Lumpur is the great rubber city of the Malay Peninsula, owing most of its prosperity to the commodity. All around are vast rubber estates. On the journey from Port Swettenham I had passed through some of those on the western side; while coming from Ipoh I had seen others on the north. In whatever direction one drives out of the town there are miles and miles of plantation rubber. Since all the properties are alike it is necessary to speak only of what I saw at one of them; but lest its manager should incur the censure of his directors, I for

wasting his time I shall not mention his name nor that of his company.

The Para rubber tree began to be planted extensively in Malaya in the early years of the present century, and, as the tyre industry developed, the area of cultivation increased with great rapidity. Nevertheless, the supply could not keep pace with the demand and in the boom year of 1910 the price of the commodity rose to fourteen shillings a pound. Subsequently, there was a slump, followed by a golden period during the Great War, but between the years 1920-1925 the profits of most of the rubber estates were infinitesimal. Since then, of course, they have been rescued from ruin by restriction of output. At the present time Malaya exports one-half of the world's consumption of rubber.

Usually a company is mindful of the comfort of its manager. He is lodged in a bungalow with cool verandas and well-ventilated rooms and some of these residences are pretty and artistic. In the clearing around the house there is a garden with lawns and flower-beds. A car is provided, the greatest boon of all, since it brings the lonely man into touch with civilization. His life is a strenuous one. Leaving home at five or six o'clock in the morning he tramps for three hours or more over his estate, supervising the coolies while they tap the rubber. After bath and breakfast he is out till noon, inspecting his trees, every one of which—and there are thousands—he watches over as though it were a delicate child. About four o'clock, when he has had his siesta, he sets forth again, not returning home until past sunset. He has the factory to control, and is responsible for the weeding and fertilization of the land. The output and shipment of the rubber are part of his duty and he has to purchase all that is needed on the plantation. In the evening he must attend to his accounts or he is busy with a mass of correspondence. An eight hour day is not for him nor for his assistants.

No one appears to know the exact life of the Para rubber tree. Many of them have yielded rubber for

thirty years or more. Probably, the younger trees are more prolific, but this may be caused by improved methods of treating the soil, or because they are not crowded so closely as they used to be formerly. The tree is tapped each morning for ten months on end and then allowed to rest for five months. A V-shaped groove is cut on the bark of the trunk about three feet from the ground, a new layer being shaved off every day. It is necessary for the tapper to have a light hand or he may injure the tree by digging too deeply. He must pare off a slice as thin as a sheet of paper, cutting no farther than the depth of the bark. The latex begins to flow at the slightest stroke.

It runs down into a little earthenware cup that is wired on to the trunk below the incision, a white viscous fluid that looks like milk. Tamil coolies, each having a particular beat, visit every tree during the course of the day, and when the cups are full they pour the liquid rubber into pails, which they bear away to the factory. Women and girls share in this work as well as the men, graceful little figures in their bright-coloured sârongs and shining brass jewellery. Sometimes, a bullock-waggon, equipped with a tank, is used for the purpose of transportation. There is much breakage of crockery owing to the monkeys who are always throwing the cups on to the ground.

Every afternoon a procession of coolies arrives at the factory with pails full of latex, which is poured into a large cistern. Thence it flows into shallow tiled troughs within the factory building, where the first process in the manufacture of raw rubber takes place. Water is mixed with the latex and acetic acid is added which causes the fluid to congeal into a solid substance resembling a mass of damp rags. This is removed from the troughs and thrown into a machine where the moisture is squeezed out. Subsequently, it is passed through other machine which wash it and compress it into sheets. At last, it becomes the familiar article of commerce in long thi



brown or yellow strips, either smoked or crape rubber. Finally, the sheets are packed in tin-lined cases by male coolies who stamp it down with their feet. It is not a complicated process and the machinery is much less elaborate than that of a rice-mill, but a strict surveillance is necessary to prevent the natives from being careless or wasteful.

The superintendence of the coolie "lines" or block of barrack-like buildings in which the coolies and their families are lodged is another of the responsibilities of the manager. These dwelling-places must be clean and comfortable and in good repair, and the Tamils require a great deal of persuasion to keep them so. Wash-houses and hospitals have to be provided and native inspectors, appointed by the government of India, make periodical visitations. Recently there has been a shortage of labour, owing to a greater demand and because of plague and cholera in India, but no permanent shortage is anticipated. The Tamils are happier and healthier than in their native land, besides earning higher wages, so they will continue to flock to Malaya. They are independent folk, walking away without notice if they get tired of a place or think that there is more money elsewhere. Unhealthy plantations are obliged to offer higher wages, but thus become more popular. Since there is no indentured labour the manager has no remedy against desertion.

The prosperity of the rubber trade seems to be assured for many years owing to the Stevenson Restriction Scheme. One of the earliest advocates of such a scheme was the sagacious Mr. A. W. Still, managing editor of the *Straits Times*, an admirable newspaper and one that is always well informed upon every matter concerning the rubber industry. If the services of Mr. Still have been as valuable as the people of Malaya seem to believe, it is strange that they have received no recognition. There has been much hostile criticism of the Restriction Scheme, but since other countries are in the habit of controlling the

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output of necessary commodities, like wheat and copper and sugar and cotton, when the price tends to fall below the cost of production, it is only fair that the Malay Peninsula should receive an adequate return for its rubber.

The tour of a rubber estate usually occupies most of the morning, during which there is a long tramp over heavy and undulating ground, and so, after bath and tiffin, most people are glad to sit and rest in a deck-chair on the veranda of the manager's house. At the bungalow that I have in mind the garden was glowing with bushes of hibiscus and great clusters of bougainvillæa and the air was filled with the tuneful song of the little black and white Malay robin. Around a pond at the bottom of the lawn two big blue kingfishers were darting to and fro in chase of food and numbers of small yellow birds were fluttering among the bushes. Palms of various kinds waved their fronds in the breeze and the rain-trees were bright with red blooms. To this pretty picture the belt of rubber trees that encompassed the clearing on every side formed a sombre background. The beauty of the scene lingers in the memory and so does its solitude.

Life on an estate is lonely, for a woman much more, naturally, than for a man. Moreover, the climate inland, more trying in most places than at the coast towns, is likely to sap feminine vitality in spite of the invigorating influence of the motor-car. The holiday to Europe comes only once in five years, and as yet no proper hill-station has been established in the Peninsula. Usually, too, there is the sadness of separation from children. A young soldier, who desires to shorten his term of service in India, sometimes makes a point of joining a regiment that will soon return home; and the bride of the Malayan planter will be fortunate if she is able to regulate her exile in a similar manner. When a girl of twenty or thereabouts marries a man ten years older than herself, a man who has a service of ten years to his credit and is able to retire at the end of twenty-five or thirty years, the chronology is

as near perfection as possible. Which is equivalent to offering the stale and harsh and gratuitous, but exceedingly wise, advice that the Englishman in the East will be a sensible fellow if he does not marry when he is very young.

## CHAPTER XX

### MALAYAN AFFAIRS

**T**HE few references in these pages to the administration of Malaya are enough to show what a strange and anomalous system it is. A glance at the map will make it clear how the incongruities have arisen. The four Federated States that occupy the middle half of the Peninsula divide the Unfederated State of Johore in the south from four other Unfederated States in the north; while the islands of Singapore and Penang with other small territories, scattered along the western coast of the mainland, form a Crown Colony. And each of these three separate bodies politic has a different form of government.

The Governor controls the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements with the help of a Legislative Council. He has unchallenged supremacy over the Unfederated Malay States, having a Secretary for Malay affairs, who supervises the British Residents acting as advisers to the native sultans. Over the Federated Malay States, however, his position is more ambiguous, for a Federal Chief Secretary, representing these States, is apt to encroach upon his authority as High Commissioner. There is the counter-part of the Two Kings of Bretenford in the F.M.S.

For many years this antagonism has been a constant source of friction and frequently efforts have been made to adjust the relationship between the two executives. A Federal Council was initiated in order to curtail the power of the Chief Secretary. At the same time the comic-opera expedient was adopted of altering his name, which previously had been Resident-General, to that of

Chief Secretary.<sup>1</sup> These efforts, nevertheless, were of no avail. Gradually, all control seemed to pass automatically into the bureau of the Chief Secretary. The governments of the Federated States became as automata in his hands. The discord between him and the High Commissioner continued to increase.

In order to put an end to this incongruous state of things Sir Laurence Guillemard is in favour of a system of decentralization in the four Federated Malay States, proposing "a policy of gradual devolution of the Chief Secretary's powers to State Councils, Residents, and, if necessary, to Federal Heads of Departments, as will in effect amount to the abolition of the Office of Chief Secretary." To most of those who are not partisans this scheme will appear a rational solution of the difficulty. The consummation desired is for each State to control its own affairs and to be in close association with His Majesty's representative at Singapore. A similar principle has been adopted in framing the constitutions of all the free-governing British colonies throughout the world.

Nevertheless, there has been considerable opposition to the proposals of Sir Laurence Guillemard throughout Malaya. The malcontents say in effect "let well alone." They point to the progress that the four Federated States have made under the present system. They argue that the investing public will lose confidence if the scheme of devolution is carried out, and will discontinue to finance the tin and rubber companies. They boggle over "a form of government," forgetting that "whatever is best administer'd is best," and make a fetish of the office of Chief Secretary.

The answers to such objections are obvious. No violent revolution is contemplated, the innovation proposed being a far less radical experiment in administration than was attempted when the Federated States were established.

<sup>1</sup> This device is reminiscent of the late Sir Charles Hawtrey's farcical comedy in which the pirate expected to outwit his political opponents by changing his name from Applejohn to Applejack.

Nothing will be done that can interfere with law and order in a single State. Although federation has been of incalculable value to Malaya, creating an esprit de corps that might not have been aroused by any other means, it is absurd to contend that all progress has been due to federation. The establishment of a railway system throughout the Peninsula, the development of the country as the greatest rubber-growing territory in the world, the use of dredging in the tin-mining industry, these surely have had more influence upon the prosperity of the Malay States? And if they continue to prosper, the investor will continue to lend his money even though one less government official continues to exist.

There is another important argument in favour of Sir Laurence Guillemard's scheme of decentralization. Every Malayan statesman must cherish the hope that the five Unfederated States of Johore, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu, will amalgamate with the four Federated States,<sup>1</sup> so that there can be uniformity of administration throughout the whole Peninsula. Obviously, it is far more likely that these States will be inclined to unite with the other States should they be assured that they will enjoy a full measure of autonomy than if they were destined to become mere subordinates of a central power. The ideal constitution of Malaya should resemble that of India, where the wit of man has made it possible for self-governing native states and British dependencies to exist under one central organization. And when this is accomplished no doubt the functions of the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States will be absorbed by a Viceroy.

So far no serious proposal has been made to adopt an electoral system of government in Malaya. Most of the better-class Malays and the better-class Chinese perceive that the time is not ripe to attempt to graft a European constitution upon an Eastern community, and no insistent demand for an extension of self-government has come from

<sup>1</sup> Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilam.



them. Since the Chinese and Malays serve upon the Federal Council and take a large share both in state and municipal affairs the influence of their public men is as powerful as they desire. The wealth and commercial importance of the richer natives incline them towards a Conservative policy.

It may not always be so. What is called "The Awakening of China" possibly will have the effect of arousing a national consciousness among the Chinese population. In the course of time, when a stable government is established in China, the Chinese in Malaya—perceiving that their nationals are the richest and most numerous both in the Colony and in the States—will attempt no doubt to assert themselves. Already their patriotism is sufficiently awake to inspire them to celebrate the anniversary of the Chinese republic and to honour the fête-days of Chinese patriots. Although suppressed ostensibly the Kuomintan is an active visible force. Rightly or wrongly we have allowed the peaceful penetration of the Chinaman to continue unchecked for more than a hundred years and sooner or later we shall have to come to terms with him. What form of compromise we shall be able to make in the future with the Chinese majority in the Malay Peninsula depends upon whether China has remained an integral nation under a patriotic government, or whether it has become a mere ally and adjunct of the Soviet republic of Russia.

The standard of education is a high one in Malaya. Throughout the country there are schools in which the poorer natives are taught to read and write in the Malay language and each rubber plantation has to provide instruction for the children of its coolies. The sons of the richer classes have the benefit of colleges like the Raffles Institution in Singapore and the Victorian Institution in Kuala Lumpur, where they receive an English education on public-school lines. Here the young Malays and the young Chinese dwell together in perfect amity, playing football and cricket and giving dramatic per-

formances with zeal and ability, being divided into "Houses" also and governed by prefects like their contemporaries in England. While they are schoolboys at all events they exhibit a plausible resemblance of British culture and British esprit de corps.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful, however, whether this attempt to drive out nature with a pitchfork will have a permanent effect in the majority of cases upon their dispositions in after life. If they continue to remain in intimate association with Englishmen some of the influence of their education will endure; but when they have been absorbed once more among their own kith and kin and live the life of natives in native homes naturally their characters will be determined by their environment. A high-class education at an English or an American university has done nothing to tame the savage passions of thousands of Chinese students, who have participated in the atrocities of the present Chinese civil war, for they have reverted to type, casting aside European manners and customs and adopting those of their fellow-countrymen. All idea of being "good sportsmen" or "playing the game," which they learnt from their English teachers, has vanished from their minds.

Fortunately, the Chinese in Malaya, owing to their close communication with the English population, have a higher standard of civilization than most of their fellow-countrymen in China. As a general rule the better classes are charming people, and, whether the sons receive an English education or not, the influence of the fathers at present is bound to be a beneficent one. The Malays, too—as already indicated—are no longer the savage race that murdered Resident Birch, but look wistfully to Great Britain for culture and emulation. Thus, since an English training in colleges like the Victorian Institution is bestowed only upon pupils whose parents can afford to pay for it and who in consequence will have the oppor-

<sup>1</sup> There is a charming account of the Victorian Institution and of education in general, in Mr. Richard Sidney's recent volume, entitled *In British Malaya To-day*

tunity of benefiting from such teaching, no great harm has been done by the experiment even though the results fail to achieve the expectations of enthusiasts. It must not be imagined, however, that a European education will be effectual in checking the growth of Cantonese dogmas if these dogmas ever spread their poison into the minds of the natives of Malaya. The prevention of such a disease is not a matter for the schoolmaster but for the statesman. It is to be hoped, too, that the educationalist of Malaya will not make the mistake of the educationalist at home by instructing their brown and yellow pupils wholly in book-learning to the exclusion of technical education. The mines and plantations offer as promising a career to the young man as the office stool.

The popularity of the cinema is firmly established all over the Peninsula. Every town of importance has its picture palace and in the larger cities there are several. The natives of every race flock to these theatres, most of which exhibit American films. Apparently, there is no government censorship, or, if it exists at all, it is perfunctory. That there should be strict supervision seems most necessary.

As a work of art and an example of stage-craft the American film is entitled to the highest praise, but many of the Hollywood pictures should never be shown to the coloured races in an English colony. All those that depict a woman in scanty attire, such as a bathing-dress or some of the costumes of the ballet, ought to be prohibited in every case. It is obvious that large numbers of the natives come to gloat over these displays of semi-nudity. Their rapture in beholding the bare flesh of a white woman is expressed audibly. Undoubtedly, their respect for the women of the ruling race will be lessened, since naturally they are unable to make a distinction between the British and the Yankee. It is strange that the Americans themselves allow such films to be exhibited to their nigger population.

It is all the more curious that the authorities do not

exercise a stricter censorship over the picture palaces, because in other ways they guard the prestige of the English-woman most scrupulously. In no case is she allowed to follow the oldest profession, and when a courtesan is detected—however circumspect her conduct and although ostensibly plying another trade—she is banished from the country at once. In the opinion of the government it is unthinkable that the Chinaman and the Malay should be aware that such a person exists.

The whole attitude of the government to the frail sisterhood is one of uncompromising severity. In Singapore previous to the war there were seminaries of fair ladies, all of them French or Russian, who lived in establishments that were conducted decently and in order, where the youth of the city could spend a frolicsome evening. The lonely bachelor, moreover, might obtain a damsel from Japan as a temporary wife, whose indentures were signed, sealed and delivered at the Japanese Consulate, and the girl would remain a loyal helpmate—usually unencumbered with children—until the time arranged for her return to her own country. Since the war, however, all this has been changed. Although none of these women were British subjects it has been decreed by officialdom at home that their presence in the Colony was an outrage to morality and every one of them has been sent away.

In *The New Machiavelli* by Mr. H. G. Wells there is a paragraph that is singularly apposite to the situation. "The life of celibacy which the active, well-fed, well-exercised and imaginatively stirred young man of the educated classes is supposed to lead from the age of nineteen or twenty, when nature certainly meant him to marry, to thirty or more, when civilization permits him to do so, is the most impossible thing in the world." Since a government department in Great Britain has deprived the youth of Malaya of a *chère amie* from Europe or Japan he may be driven to seek consolation among the natives of the country. And whenever this happens the inevitable result is the multiplication of the half-caste. Which is a

consequence far more deplorable than the evil that officialdom has endeavoured to remove.

Not many years ago a virulent type of malaria was prevalent in all parts of the country. It used to decimate whole communities. It was especially deadly upon rubber estates, where the Tamil coolies died like flies. The most unhealthy plantations were not situated in the neighbourhood of a mango swamp, as might be supposed, but those occupying an ideal position upon high ground. In the course of time the reason of this apparent anomaly was ascertained. The fever-bearing mosquito is fastidious in its choice of water, avoiding all that is unsavoury and impure and frequents the fresh, clean pools that percolate through the soil at the foot of a hill. From these breeding grounds it spreads infection far and wide.

At last the government determined to take action. An anti-malarial department was set up and the best scientific opinion solicited. A body of officials was appointed, whose skill and energy soon began to cause an abatement of the plague. The methods that they adopted still prevail and are visible all over the land. In the Government Park at Singapore, along the golf-links at Tanglin Barracks, throughout the public gardens at Kuala Lumpur—in all places where the land is undulating—there is an elaborate system of open drainage in order that no running water shall collect in pools. These precautions, and the disinfection of stagnant places, are preventing the spread of malaria everywhere.

Nevertheless, the anti-malarial authorities receive a good deal of chaff, and ribald folk are apt to scoff at their exertions. It seems to be the fashion to poke fun at them. Not long since a fatal outbreak of malaria occurred at Kuala Lumpur soon after the vegetation had been cleared away from the open drains, whereupon the wags declared that the officials killed more people than they cured. This would be an ungrateful libel upon a splendid body of public officials had it not been evident that the words were spoken in jest.

The most urgent necessity in Malaya is an adequate hill-station like those in the neighbouring Dutch colonies. In Java there are sanatoriums high up in the mountains within a day's journey of all the large centres of population, while sparsely inhabited Sumatra possesses the healthy regions of Brastagi and the Padang highlands. Residents in the F.M.S. and the Straits Settlements are in the habit of visiting these places, but the journey to them all is an expensive one and therefore only available for the few. It is needful to have a health resort in a convenient part of the Federated States so that persons of moderate means will be able to spend a holiday there.

A favourable spot is said to have been found upon Bukit Fraser, a mountain in Selangor about fifty miles from Kuala Lumpur, and, as the site has been approved by Sir William Maxwell, late Chief Secretary to the Government of the F.M.S., there can be little doubt that it is suitable for the purpose. Already the land is surveyed and a road is being built to the top. Soon construction will be started in earnest, but it will be some years before the work is finished.

The ideal hill-station, however, must be situated upon a wide plateau, where there is room for hotels and villas and official residencies as well as for golf-links and a race-course and the little town that will grow up eventually. There ought to be a wide expanse for walks and drives and horse-riding. Otherwise, if there are no opportunities for exercise the place will have no attraction and those who visit it will receive no physical benefit. Unfortunately, notwithstanding its natural advantages, Bukit Fraser does not fulfil all these requirements, for the space upon its summit is restricted. In this respect it resembles Penang hill.

In the opinion of most people the Cameron highlands, which are situated in the same mountain range a hundred miles or more to the north, will provide a far better locality for a hill-station. Here there is a tableland of vast extent, four or five thousand feet above sea-level, and although

farther remote than Bukit Fraser from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, it will be more convenient for the residents of Ipoh, Taiping and Penang. Some fear that the climate may be too damp and rainy, but, if the place proves to be satisfactory, there is no reason why a sanatorium should not be created here also. If Java can maintain a score of hill-stations surely Malaya can maintain two !

Since Australia, New Zealand and South Africa use the English monetary system, it is curious that Malaya has preserved a coinage of its own. There is a reason why Ceylon should be bound to the rupee because of its proximity to India, but there does not seem any necessity for the Malay Peninsula to estimate its values in dollars. The current coin is the Straits dollar, which is stabilized to the pound sterling, the exchange being eight dollars and fifty-five cents to the pound. Such an arrangement naturally encourages high prices, since the unit by which they are adjusted is worth almost half a crown. If the English coinage were adopted it is possible that the shilling would have almost as much purchasing power as the existing dollar and eventually such deflation, making for cheapness, would be of great benefit to the country. It is the natural complement of the policy of Free Trade.

Both the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States are well provided with newspapers. Singapore has two daily papers, the *Straits Times* and the *Singapore Free Press*, as well as the *Malayan Saturday Post*, which is a weekly publication. In Penang there are the *Straits Echo* and the *Penang Gazette*, while the *Times of Malaya* is published at Ipoh and the *Malay Mail* in Kuala Lumpur. All these publications are of a high class, although naturally some of them excel the others. The leading articles in the best of them are written by capable journalists, and they contain foreign cables from all over the world. Considerable scholarship is shown in the special contributions and the literary and dramatic criticisms. The *Straits Times* is as excellent as any newspaper at home that circulates in a town of similar size. Singapore also possesses

a comic illustrated journal on the lines of *Punch*, called the *Straits Produce*, the caricatures of which, drawn by Major Tyte, are worthy of a place in its London prototype.

Malaya, too, is fortunate in its literature. Already a small library of modern fiction has grown up around it, and many of these novels reveal a considerable insight into the manners and customs of the country. But its chief glory in letters is due to the volumes written by its civil servants. One of the first authors of eminence to write of the Malays was Sir Frank Swettenham, who, commencing his career as a youthful cadet, held office in various Residencies and finally became Governor and High Commissioner. No one has a greater knowledge of Malaya, and no one has described its people or recounted its history more exhaustively. Mr. R. O. Windstedt, another government official, has done for the Malay language what Dr. Johnson did for our own, and his dictionary is the latest publication of its kind. But most popular by far of these writers is Sir Hugh Clifford, who joined the service as a cadet and now has become Governor, having thus passed through every grade, "from Powder-monkey to Admiral" as it were, like Sir Frank Swettenham.

Undoubtedly, the literary reputation of Hugh Clifford would stand far higher than it does had not Rudyard Kipling been working in similar fields. And the Indian writer had the good fortune to start first. It is not that the later author has based his style upon the earlier one, or has copied him in any way, but Clifford, like Kipling, has made himself a master of the short story and excels as a student of native life. Thus, the fame of the one has overshadowed the fame of the other and the reading public has been led to believe that it is unnecessary to become acquainted with a second writer of jungle tales.

Of late the public seems to have realized its omission. A demand is growing for the works of Hugh Clifford and new editions are being published. This appreciation of good literature is creditable to popular taste. For Sir Hugh Clifford's knowledge of native psychology is far more



comprehensive than even that of Kipling, while his English is far more impeccable. The best of his stories are always things of beauty and his tales of the horrible and the supernatural have a weird and haunting power. And every one acquainted with his works will comprehend some of the mystery of Malaya.

## CHAPTER XXI

### A VOYAGE TO JAVA

THE journey from Singapore to Java is swift, easy and luxurious. The passenger is conveyed from wharf to wharf without the inconvenience of using a tender. In addition to the great liners from Holland, which make the journey once a week, there are the admirable coasting steamers of the K.P.M.,<sup>1</sup> the *Melchior Treub* and the *Plancius*. I travelled in the first-named ship, leaving Singapore at four o'clock on Friday afternoon the 29th of January.

The *Melchior Treub* is a vessel of 4000 tons, with fine broad decks and an unusually spacious smoking-lounge forward. It has a number of single cabins and boasts a bathroom with a porcelain bath, but all the others contain merely a water-jar and a tin can for sluicing purposes. In comparison with the cuisine of the Europe Hotel the food seemed unappetizing, being uncompromisingly Dutch of the heaviest standard. For the first time also I tasted the abominable essence which passes for coffee all over Insulinde. Most of the officers spoke English and were extremely affable, being anxious apparently to please their passengers.

The ship was full. Many business men were returning from Malaya to Batavia and Sourabaja and several parties of Americans were going to make a swift tour of Java. Amongst the latter, still travelling by herself, was my old acquaintance Mrs. B.-B. of the *André-Lebon*. A more bitter Anglophobe than ever, this indomitable lady was

<sup>1</sup> Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij, or the Royal Packet Navigation Company.

seething with indignation because the British authorities had not thought fit to arrest her during her recent progress through India and Ceylon. It was the most contemptible cowardice on their part, she declared, for she had given the fullest provocation. Obviously, it had been her ambition to become the heroine of a desperate international embroilment between England and the United States. Passing from one group of compatriots to another she gave vent to her indignation unceasingly; but although her fellow-countrymen listened patiently at first they did not appear to be impressed by her story. Very soon most of them avoided her. Before the end of the evening every one regarded her as a bore.

A worse misfortune befell her when she retired to her cabin. As luck would have it her stable companion happened to be a young Jewess from London, a virile creature with raven hair and crimson cheeks, and the most staunch of British patriots. No sooner did the American lady begin to abuse England than the Hebrew lady retaliated with acrimony; and since the latter had more fluency and a much louder voice she carried far heavier metal than her opponent. People in adjoining cabins were kept awake for several hours. The altercation consisted of the customary "back-chat," which always is heard whenever the Briton and the Yankee engage in a war of words. Some of it was audible to the sleepless ones in the same corridor; the rest was repeated by the victorious Jewess at the breakfast-table next morning.

"You English!" began Mrs. B.-B., "kicking off as usual. "It sets me crazy to see how you crush down the poor Indians."

"And what abaht the wiy you Americans bully the poor niggers?" retorted Mrs. Aaronstein.

"How can you compare such trash with the refined, cultivated natives in India?" said Mrs. B.-B., with scorn.

"Well, you ought to be ashamed of behaving as you do to the Jews. . . . They're a civilized race at any rite. . . .

The Jews have produced hundreds of great men, but America's never had one, except George Washington—and he was a fluke."

The repartee was so original that Mrs. B.-B. had no reply to it, so Mrs. Aaronstein scored the first point. Her antagonist, however, pulled herself together immediately.

"I'm glad you mentioned niggers," she proceeded.

"What orf it?"

"Didn't we give them their freedom when the British were in favour of slavery?"

"You did, did you?"

"Yes, we did."

"Very clever of you, weren't it. . . . But let me tell you that England abolished slavery years before you did. . . . Imitators, that's what you are, imitators! . . . Read 'istory."

The sea was smooth during the whole of the voyage, as it must be more often than not, for much of it is land-locked. On Saturday morning we arrived at the island of Banka and came to anchor outside the port of Muntok, where some of the cargo and a few Dutch officials were disembarked. Viewed from the ship it appeared an attractive little town, the white walls and red roofs of its houses buried in foliage, the green plains beyond bounded by lofty hills. A graceful lighthouse, rising above a plantation of palm trees, crowns the point of a small promontory, the calm green sea flows with scarcely a ripple along the shore of the bay. Banka is famous for its tin mines, which now are a government monopoly and worked by the State.

For the greater part of the day we were steaming through the Banka Straits with the flat, mangrove-fringed coast of Sumatra close upon our starboard and the island of Banka far distant on the port side. One shower followed another during the afternoon, it being impossible very often to see the land through the heavy downpour. From October until April is the period of the wet monsoon

throughout the whole of the Dutch East Indies and much rain falls nearly every day. The morning is more often fine and sunny than the afternoon.

On Sunday morning at 7 o'clock the *Melchior Treub*<sup>1</sup> arrived alongside the quay at Tandjong Priok, the port of Batavia, 528 miles distant from Singapore. Here I had a pleasant example of Dutch hospitality. Notwithstanding the early hour Mr. Van der Hoek, Secretary to the Resident of Batavia—to whom I had an introduction from a friend in Holland—came on board to welcome me as soon as the gangway was fixed. Knowing that the *Melchior Treub* did not leave on its voyage along the coast to Sourabaja until late in the afternoon he insisted upon placing himself and his car at my disposal. Naturally, he was the most capable of guides.

The capital of Java lies six miles inland. The city is connected with the port by a canal, whose banks are fringed with a row of palms that suggest the tall lopped trees of Hobbema, so that the flat green country is reminiscent of a Dutch landscape. And the impression of a scene in Holland is emphasized when Old Batavia is reached and one finds oneself in a maze of tortuous streets, hemmed in by ancient houses and intersected by a network of narrow waterways. This is where the original town was situated, the first Dutch settlement at the end of the sixteenth century, which the sturdy old adventurers, Coen and Swaardecron, made their stronghold.

But few relics of these early days now remain. There is the old Town Hall, the Portuguese Church, a crumbling gateway and an antique cannon that lies neglected on the ground. Besides these, and a human skull transfixed by an iron spike and exposed upon a wall—the skull of the traitor Pieter Erbeveld “of accursed memory,” who raised a revolution two hundred years ago—there are no other memorials of the days of the old East India Company. The original fortifications have crumbled into dust; the

<sup>1</sup> The ship is named after the late Dr. Melchior Treub, a celebrated director of the Botanical Gardens at Buitenzorg in Java.

dwellings of the first Dutch pioneers have given place to others.

Nevertheless, in comparison with Saigon and Singapore the existing Old Batavia is an ancient city. A large proportion of the buildings that survive belongs to the eighteenth century. Most of them were in existence before Penang possessed a single human habitation. And the mynheers and their families used to dwell in these insanitary homes in the midst of the fetid canals until a hundred years ago, a prey to the ravages of tropical diseases, when at last it was discovered that the terrible mortality might be prevented by removing the European colony to a more healthy situation. Then, a new city was founded upon the plains of Weltevreden, about a mile away, and Old Batavia was left to the natives. It is more salubrious in these days, for the marsh-land that used to surround it has been drained, and part of it has become the commercial quarter, where most of the great offices and warehouses are situated. One is content to wander with a camera for hours through the narrow streets, examining the old-world houses and watching the barges and sampans that pass along the waterways.

A large portion of the old city is a Chinatown now, nearly all the habitable dwellings being occupied by Chinamen and their families, who seem immune against pestiferous insects and germs of every kind. The Chinese of Java differ to a large extent from those in Malaya, although most of them originated from the same southern provinces. The majority have been born in Netherlands India and are the offspring of native mothers, but they retain the characteristics of their forefathers, remaining a race apart. None of them will work as coolies or act as domestic servants, regarding such occupations as degrading, but either become artisans or engage in trade. Unlike their compatriots in the Straits Settlements their reputation for honesty is not remarkable and they are unpopular both with Europeans and Javanese.

A canalized river, called Molenvliet or mill-stream,

runs from Old Batavia to Weltevreden, enclosed by stone embankments with a broad highway on either side. Apparently, it serves as the general wash-house for all the native population. From dawn to sunset swarms of brown figures cluster along the brink, gay splashes of colour in their printed sârongs, busily engaged in cleansing their garments or themselves. Like all adult natives in the East they bathe in their clothes, but little children of both sexes paddle naked in the stream or wash their limbs in a tin basin, sitting on the bank. All the way from the old town to the new rows of shops and houses line the street on both sides of the canal, some built close to the pavement, others set back in shady gardens, but every one is screened and sheltered by umbrageous trees.

At last the canal disappears under a cross-road and a street of imposing shops comes into view. We have reached New Batavia—or Weltevreden as it is called—and here the car of my cicerone turned to the right into the grounds of the Hotel des Indes. A magnificent banyan or waringin tree, the largest in the island, stands on one side of the drive, its network of depending branches drooping in a broad circle to the ground.

All the hotels of Java are constructed upon one plan. A central block contains the lounge, the dining-hall, a writing-room, and the bureau and offices. Very wisely the architect does not depend for ventilation upon the electric fan, which in many cases only stirs up the bad air, but builds the rooms as high as possible, supporting them with pillars instead of walls, while projecting eaves afford protection from the rain. The bedrooms occupy separate wings, grouped around the main building, with which they are connected by covered passages. In the extensive grounds of the Hotel des Indes the various annexes form a series of streets and a car is able to drive up to one's bedroom door. In front of each room stands a large porch or veranda, furnished with a writing-table and lounge chairs, which serves as a private salon.

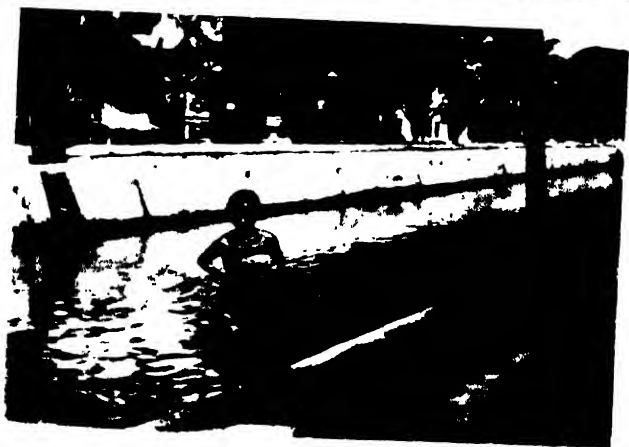
The hotel is run most admirably. The manager and

a couple of Dutch assistants seem always on duty in the bureau, except at meal times when one of them is on watch in the dining-room; and they will call a car for a parting guest or pay the driver of some new arrival, and even fetch a drink if the waiter is tardy, being ready, in fact, to undertake any task that happens to arise. It is essential that they should be so adaptive, for the Javanese servants—picturesque fellows in blue-striped ducks with a *batik* handkerchief as a head-dress—have an hereditary aversion to manual labour, like all the Malays, and are slow, lazy, and unintelligent. In spite of its renown, for the Hotel des Indes advertises itself as “the leading Hotel in Malaysia,” it will disappoint the expectation of most English visitors. The food is heavy and indigestible, and, since no steward’s room is provided, the dining-hall is as full of children as the deck of a French liner. Apparently, the hotel is a refuge for the *mère de famille*, who shirks the responsibilities of housekeeping.

After *déjeuner* with Mr. Vander Hoek and his wife—a clever lady who holds high medical degrees—I made a tour of Weltevreden. The new city has been constructed with a splendid disregard for space, as though it were intended to cover as great an area as possible in order to avoid all risk of overcrowding. Every bungalow stands apart in its own grounds and even some of the shops have little gardens around them. Huge waringin and kanari trees line the roadside, but the streets are broader than those of any other town in southern Asia, so they are not overshadowed by foliage like the roads of Saigon. As a compensation, however, every breeze that blows can circulate freely. For the same reason great open spaces of grass-land exist in many parts of the suburbs. The Koningsplein is the largest of these, a treeless park a square mile in extent, surrounded by official residences and the most palatial of private bungalows.

Most of the homes of Weltevreden appear to be of the same size, suggesting that wealth is distributed fairly evenly among the bourgeoisie. Few look as pretty and







homelike as the houses of Singapore, nor have the gardens such beautiful green lawns and display of flower-beds; but they seem to lack nothing as regards comfort. The public water and electricity supply is connected with all of them. The majority are large square villas of one storey with white walls and a red-tiled roof, built in the severe classical style that is characteristic of the architecture of Netherlands India. A broad stoop in front of the house, approached from the garden by a short flight of steps, serves usually as the general living-room. Wide window spaces show the universal regard for ventilation.

All the rest of the Weltevreden architecture is on a mammoth scale. Many of the shops are detached buildings. From the appearance of the public offices one would imagine that the Dutch have striven to excel all other Asiatic colonies in size and magnificence. The immense Concordia Club, which stands in a large open space called the Waterloo Plein, possesses a finer suite of reception-rooms than any club in the East Indies. Yet, in spite of the wide streets and great plains the much renowned garden city seems chaotic and ill-planned. There is no uniformity in its conception. A shipping office and a railway station have been plumped down on the outskirts of the Koningsplein not far from the National Museum and the Palace of the Governor-General. Hence an unmistakable suggestion of the slovenly, which no grandeur can destroy.

Every traveller should pay a visit to the Museum, and on a Sunday afternoon it is interesting to watch the holiday-making natives who come to study the collection of Javanese art and industry. Here are specimens of every implement and utensil that have been in use among the people of Insulinde both in ancient and modern times. We see models of all sorts of canoes and sampans and every kind of dwelling from the horned *batak* houses of Sumatra to the basket-work huts of Celebes and Borneo. There are costumes and musical instruments and weapons of

war, and some of the examples of the ancient *kris* have ivory handles with wonderful carving and beautifully damascened blades. In one of the rooms the cases are filled with native jewellery and gold and silver ware. My visit on this occasion had to be a cursory one, for it was necessary to return to Tandjong Priok to rejoin the ship.

About eight o'clock on the following morning the *Melchior Treub* had arrived at Samarang, a prosperous seaport a little more than half-way between Batavia and Sourabaja. Since the steamer lies in the roadstead, the harbour can only be reached by launch; and, as there happened to be a heavy ground swell, which probably would increase during the afternoon, passengers were warned that those who landed might not be able to return. So, although the ship remained at anchor all day, no one ventured on shore. The city looks attractive from the sea and part of it seems to consist of a pretty suburb built amongst the trees upon a range of hills.

A voyage along the north coast of Java gives some idea of its geography. For there are glimpses of the chain of mountains that runs through the whole length of the interior, and it is apparent that the great range forms a backbone down the centre of the island. Many of the peaks exceed 10,000 feet in height, Mahameru, the loftiest, being almost 13,000, and a dozen or more are active volcanoes. On either side of the mountains is an expanse of fertile plain extending to the coast. The island is 620 miles long and 120 miles in breadth at the widest point.

After leaving Samarang the sea became somewhat rough for two or three hours, but about sunset we passed into smoother water and it remained calm all night. At 6 o'clock in the morning we reached the port of Sourabaja, which, like that at Batavia, is some distance from the city. Both harbours have fine modern docks. The custom officials are lenient, but the fares of the motor-cars are outrageous in both places. One does not expect to pay sixteen shillings to drive from the ship to the hotel. In Singapore the price is two dollars.

The Oranje Hotel proved to be a replica of the Hotel des Indes on a smaller scale. A main building with a dining-hall and lounge—both of which were lofty and spacious and open to the air on every side—was surrounded by barrack-like annexes, ranged around a garden courtyard. The bedrooms were excellent in every way, each being provided with a comfortable veranda, but the so-called private bathrooms were the horrible shower-places, which prevail all over the Dutch East Indies. No one can hope to keep clean in a hot climate by sluicing with a can. With a little persuasion, however, it is possible to obtain a bucket of hot water. As usual, the management was efficient. In the bureau were two or three alert young Dutchmen, always ready and eager to answer questions and afford assistance, a pleasant contrast to most of the hotels in Malaya, where one has to deal with lethargic Indian youths or obtuse Chinamen. All the “boys” were Javanese, picturesque fellows with coloured handkerchief worn turban fashion around their heads, but remarkably slow and foolish.

Java seems to ooze wealth from every acre, and nowhere are there more outward and visible signs of these riches than in the great seaport of Sourabaja. The population, both native and European, is about two-thirds of that of Old and New Batavia,<sup>1</sup> but, as the city is more compact and concentrated, at first sight it appears to be more immense. Its prosperity is due principally to the sugar industry, for it is surrounded by plantations and sugar factories. It is the centre also of a rich rice country with many tea estates in the neighbourhood. Judging from the same indications as in Batavia it would appear that wealth is not unequally divided. Scores of comfortable villas can be seen, but few palaces.

The shops of Sourabaja, many of which occupy detached buildings like those of Weltevreden, give the impression of being finer and more luxurious by far than any in Ceylon, Malaya or Indo-China. The most important are situated

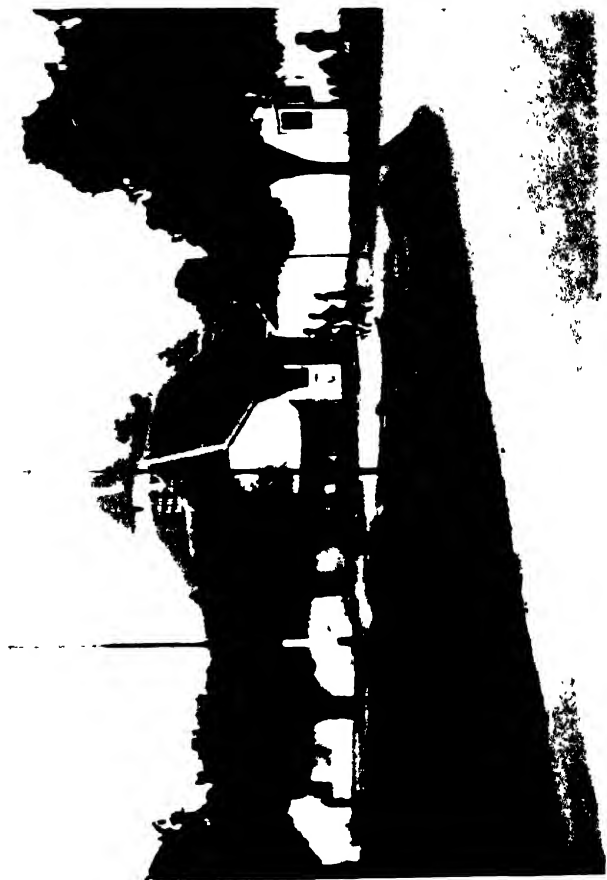
<sup>1</sup> There are more than 20,000 Europeans in Sourabaja and 200,000 natives.

## CHAPTER XXII

### CENTRAL JAVA

**S**OURABAJA has the reputation of being hot and airless. No doubt the large island of Madura—which lies close to the coast across a narrow strait—helps to obstruct the breezes from the sea, but the temperature exceeds that of Batavia by very little and certainly is no greater than that of Colombo. On the 2nd of February the thermometer stood at  $87^{\circ}$  at midday and was  $82^{\circ}$  at ten o'clock in the evening. Popular opinion also regards Sourabaja as a dull place, and most travellers remain here for as short a time as possible, proceeding on the tour of the island without delay. This is a mistake. The bustle and activity of the great city will provide a constant source of interest; and, since the population is a conglomeration of almost every type of native in Netherlands India, it is possible to compare the various races simultaneously. Moreover, it is well to tarry for a couple of days in order to explore the surrounding country.

The excursion that all ought to make, although few do so, is a visit to Grissece, "the cradle of Moslem Java." Here the first Mohammedan priest to land in the island lived and taught at the end of the fourteenth century, and he is buried a few miles away at Giri, where his tomb can still be seen. In the early days of the old East India Company Grissece was an important seaport. It is a pretty old Dutch village full of quaint old Dutch houses with red-tiled roofs, built around an open common and nestling amidst clusters of trees. An ancient mosque stands in one of the principal streets. The little town







rivals Old Batavia in antiquity, many of the buildings being two hundred years old. Some of them, alas, are falling into decay, being allowed to remain uninhabited, since it is more profitable to leave them as nesting-places for the swallows that build edible nests. These birds come from the numerous limestone caves in the neighbourhood.

It is a pleasant drive from Sourabaja to Grisse, a distance of twenty-five miles. At first, the road passes through acres of paddy fields, flooded with water and bristling with young shoots, in most of which a solemn white bird of the stork tribe is wading. Then, the groups of native huts grow more numerous and the avenue of tall trees meets overhead. For the rest of the journey the road becomes an exquisite tropical lane fringed with woodland on either side. The bamboo is one of the great beauties of the Java forest, its soft foliage harmonizing perfectly with every variety of palm. It flourishes in great luxuriance along the banks of a river, where the tall branches look like tufts of green ostrich feathers as they sway to and fro in the breeze.

It is possible also to travel to one of the southern health resorts in the Kawi mountains and return to Sourabaja on the same day. The drive of a hundred miles or more makes it apparent why Java is the richest island of its size in the world. A dense population and a rich soil are the two chief causes of its wealth and evidences of both are visible everywhere. Crowds of natives throng the roads and swarm in all the fields. Miles of jungle-clad hills do not meet the eye as in Malaya, but every inch of the soil is cultivated from the sea-coast to the mountain-tops. Paddy fields succeed sugar plantations throughout the plains; the highlands are covered with tea and coffee estates. Every square yard seems to be fertile and there is no unproductive land visible.

Most travellers proceed from Sourabaja to the famous health resort at Tosari, 6000 feet high, in order to make

the ascent of the crater of Bromo. Having an aversion to active volcanoes at close proximity I decided not to visit this part of the country—although assured that the scenery is very lovely—but decided instead to journey to Djokjakarta in the centre of the island. Travelling in Java is no trouble. The Dutch government has its tourist traffic organized efficiently and must reap a rich reward, since thousands of Australians and Americans pass through the colony every year. There is an Official Tourist Bureau in Weltevreden, with branches in the other cities, where all information is given gratuitously. In addition there are many private agencies which will arrange an itinerary, providing both a guide and a car. Comfortable hotels and tolerable rest-houses will be found in every part of the island. If Malaya succeeds in attracting visitors those in authority will have to emulate the example of Holland.

Following my habit of making the long journeys by rail and using a car to explore the country around definite centres I went to my next stopping-place by train, travelling from 9.40 in the morning until 4.30 in the afternoon. The rolling-stock of the State railways is comfortable, but the restaurant car is placed in front of the first-class coach and all day long the waiters come clattering through the compartment with food, drink and ices for the natives and Eurasians in the second and third class carriages beyond. The luncheon was execrable—a cold omelette, a steak as tough as leather and slices of raw ham. Strange to say, a Chinese caterer and a Chinese cook were responsible for those abominations.

Heavy showers fell at intervals and the mountains were hidden in mist. Nothing could be seen but a vast expanse of sugar plantations and paddy fields extending far and wide on both sides of the railway line. Not a yard of land is allowed to remain untilled, patches of rice almost encroaching upon the permanent way. Thatched barns for storing the grain stood here

and there; the train passed by many large sugar-refining mills. And notwithstanding their reputation for idleness the busy natives were ploughing and planting everywhere. The Dutch seem to know how to keep them at work.

Although little regard was paid in former days to the rights and welfare of the native proprietors, the present land system is designed to protect the native landed interest as far as possible. In theory the ownership of most of the soil is vested in the State, but the peasants are encouraged to acquire allotments on leasehold tenure. At the same time they are subject to strict government supervision, being permitted to hold their plots only as long as they work them to advantage. All over the island safeguards have been adopted to prevent the European from expropriating the indolent brown man. In many cases the sugar factories are rationed strictly, being forbidden to have more than a certain area under cultivation. The land is leased by the companies from native owners, who receive in rent the equivalent of what they would have made by growing rice. Such an arrangement is popular with the peasants, for besides drawing a rent they are able to earn good wages by working in the sugar-cane plantations. A rotation of crops also is being adopted. After producing sugar the land becomes a paddy field and vice versa. The cane helps to manure the soil for rice and the rich irrigated rice-land afterwards yields an excellent crop of sugar. Thus, a maximum of production of both commodities is maintained.

The water-buffalo is the most important beast of burden in Java just as it is in Malaya. One of these repulsive animals is to be seen in every field, dragging a plough, or wallowing in the mud, or being led along by a small boy. A native child usually is in charge of these fierce black beasts, which obey their little keepers meekly. All sorts of legends are told of the fidelity of the buffalo to its small master. It is alleged that it

will defend him against a tiger if necessary or will trample on the snake that tries to attack him. Undoubtedly it is tame and docile towards the child, although often a most intractable creature in the hands of an adult.

Apart from its own features of interest, Djokjakarta (or Djokja as it is termed more often) has one supreme attraction close at hand—the ancient Buddhist temple of Borobudur. Before the discovery of Angkor-Vat it was the most famous Hindu monument in Asia; and, although not comparable with the Cambodian masterpiece either in size or in beauty, it possesses many wonders of its own. The Borobudur is over a thousand years old, belonging in all probability to the eighth or ninth century, and in its early days was a shrine of great importance; but, after the Moslem invasion of Java when the ancient faith was overthrown, the temple was allowed to fall into ruin and decay. Covered with volcanic ashes and overwhelmed by tropical vegetation like the ruins of Angkor, the monument became hidden completely and all trace of it was lost. Its existence, however, was not forgotten, and while the English were in Java the task of excavation was undertaken by Stamford Raffles. Although capable archæologists were employed and the work was carried out in an efficient manner it is a pity that Borobudur was uncovered at this period. For during the greater part of the nineteenth century the Dutch as well as the natives treated the temple as a quarry. Its stones were used to construct other buildings; its statues were removed to adorn official residences. The tourist chipped off any piece of bas-relief that took his fancy. It was not until recent years that the authorities at last began to realize their responsibilities and put an end to this vandalism. Since then a thorough restoration has been completed by a government department. Borobudur is now in an excellent state of preservation.

It is only twenty-six miles distant from Djokja,

pleasant drive along a good road shaded by avenues of kanari, tamarind and waringin trees. Interminable rice-fields stretch in all directions; the highway often traverses thick groves of palms mingled with clusters of feathery bamboos. Herds of goats graze upon the banks and flocks of ducks splash in the pools, sure evidence of the prosperity of the peasants. During the whole journey crowds of natives passed along the road in ceaseless procession, the women carrying a brown or yellow umbrella, the men wearing their blue half-moon sun-helmets. It was difficult for the driver of the car to avoid running over some of them.

The situation of the temple is a beautiful one. It stands in a wide plain amidst plantations of palm trees, enclosed by a range of mountains which forms part of the series that runs for five or six hundred miles through the middle of the island. Three great peaks, one of them an active volcano, lift their rugged crests ten thousand feet above sea-level not far away. Avenues and thickets have been planted closely around the base of the ancient shrine. In the distance it looks at first sight like the model of some ornate bridecake, encircled by richly encrusted tiers and crowned by little rows of domes and pinnacles. It appears to be a solid mass, rectangular in form, and would be a perfect square but for the projecting flanges around the sides.

Yet, it is not solid. It is merely a shell of stonework, built around a small hill, which has been squared and levelled into the shape required and sheathed with a thin covering of masonry. It is pyramidal in construction and its sides have a steep slope, rising in a series of galleries, four in number. Upon the space on the summit three circular platforms stand one above another, dotted with rows of small bell-shaped dagabas surrounding one large dagaba in the centre. The monument belongs to the stupa or dagaba type of temple, one of the gigantic shrines that preserves some relic of Buddha. It is built of blocks of lava.

Each of the four galleries is bounded by a wall, the coping-stone of which is adorned along the whole of its length with turrets and statues and cupolas, forming an enclosed pathway about two yards in width around the entire building. The ascent from one terrace to the other is made by four steep stairways rising from the bottom to the top of the Borobudur, dividing each side of the temple into equal parts. Every yard, both of the inner and the outer walls of the galleries, is covered with bas-reliefs, the sculpturing of which is carved in a far higher relief than any of those at Angkor. The plinth at the base of the monument is decorated in the same way. It is said that the carvings are more than three miles in length.

The human figures of the bas-reliefs, although not perhaps the accessory ornamentation, show a higher artistic perfection than those at Angkor, and form the chief glory of the Borobudur, the architectural features of which are not remarkable apart from these carvings. Intended to portray the life history of Buddha they reveal at the same time the manners and customs of the people of Java at the period when they were sculptured. We see the peasant at work in the rice-fields with the same wooden plough and the same repulsive buffalo that he uses now, and he balances his burden at either end of a bamboo pole across his shoulders just as he does at the present day. There are scenes that show war-chariots and sea-going galleys in time of old, and pictures of kings and chieftains and the armies that did battle for them. Images of Buddha look down from niches in the wall everywhere, Buddha squatting upon lotus cushions, Buddha enthroned in state, Buddha teaching and Buddha wrapt in meditation; and there is a statue of him concealed in each of the small latticed dagabas upon the topmost terraces.

The sculptures of Borobudur can be examined at any hour of the day, for one side of the temple is always in the shade. Close at hand, too, is a passagrahan or rest-house,



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where meals are provided or a bed for the night; and from its cool veranda the elaborate ornamentation that covers the exterior of the monument can be admired at leisure. Towards evening one should not fail to mount to the central dagaba when the setting sun is burnishing the fronds of the palm groves and leaves patches of the brightest green between the shadows in the vast plain, while the western mountain peaks are becoming tinged with crimson, and, as the twilight deepens, the lofty summit of the volcano Merapi is lighted with an angry glow.

Not far from Borobudur are two small temples of the same period, the Tjandi Pawan and the Mendoet Tjandi. The latter has been restored to its original state by the government department that has the care of ancient monuments, a method now adopted in every case by the archæologist. Many other Hindu ruins are to be found in the neighbourhood, the most famous being a group of temples, known as the Tjandi Loro Djonggrang in the Prambanan plain. It is a distance of twenty miles from the city of Djokja, and, as the passagrahan is not to be recommended, it is advisable to take luncheon in the car or make only a half-day excursion. There are three temples at Prambanan, all in a state of decay, and although they possess many beautiful bas-reliefs, few of them are comparable with those of Borobudur, so a visit of an hour or two will satisfy any one who is a student of Hindu archæology.

My visit to Djokja lasted five days, a short enough time in which to learn something of the city itself and visit the objects of interest in the neighbourhood. The Grand Hotel, just as well appointed as the Oranje at Sourabaja, is built on a similar plan, with a central building and separate wings on either side, enclosing a garden quadrangle. But the place has an airless position, and it was often difficult to sleep until the early hours of the morning when the heat became less unendurable. Around the bedroom windows the

geckoes kept up their persistent serenade of "tock-ay tock-ay."

Djakakarta is the capital of a native principality of the same name, ruled over by a Sultan who is *advised* by a Dutch Resident, the relationship of the official to the sovereign being more autocratic by far than that of a British Resident to the chief of a Malay State. The Sultan is the vassal of the Batavian government, drawing a princely revenue but exercising no executive power. Permitted to maintain an outward show of majesty, he lives in an immense palace with a retinue of retainers, dancing girls and concubines. He is said to possess also the privileges of a grand seigneur, having first claim upon every bride before her marriage, this patronage being regarded by his subjects as a high honour. It is probable, however, that this prerogative has become obsolete. In every respect the Sultan is now a puppet ruler and has to do as he is told.

His palace, or kraton, is a town in itself, a square mile in area, with long streets and wide squares and a jumble of buildings of various size. But, except upon fête days, when there is an exhibition of native pageantry, there is little of interest to be seen in the royal residence. The visitor is escorted through reception-rooms and dancing pavilions and audience chambers, grotesquely furnished and with garish decorations, all sombre and deserted. At intervals a few melancholy soldiers in shabby uniforms slouch up and down in the main courtyard. The most remarkable objects in the whole demesne are two great waringin trees that have been clipped into the shape of umbrellas.

Of all the cities in the island Djokja and the neighbouring Soerakarta reveal the most intimate pictures of native life. For the most part the inhabitants belong to the ancient Javanese race and have been affected to a less extent by Chinese and European influence than the natives around Batavia and Sourabaja. This is natural, since they were the last of the people of Java to submit to Dutch rule

and continued to fight desperately for their independence until a hundred years ago. The Javanese have always been the most numerous and progressive people of Netherlands India. Although descended from the primitive Malay stock they are not an unmixed race, and retain many of the characteristics of the Hindu immigrants with whom their ancestors intermingled. In appearance they are more robust and self-assertive than the people in other parts of the island. The next most numerous race are the Sundanese, who inhabit the western districts and the country near Batavia, a somewhat inferior type of native, having no affinity with India. The Javanese and the Sundanese resemble one another closely, so it is difficult for a stranger to distinguish between them.

The main street of Djokja is a fine thoroughfare, lit by electric light and shaded on either side by great trees. It contains many considerable shops, some of them occupying detached buildings, after the Dutch fashion, and standing in their own grounds. The palace of the Resident is situated in the same road, not far from the two principal hotels, and has a beautiful garden disfigured by quantities of statuary—stolen from the Borobudur and adjacent temples—which are wholly unsuited to their environment. Near by are the barracks of the garrison and the premises of a social club. From this quarter of the city, and from almost any other when the sky is clear, one may view the volcanic mountain of Merapi, towering ten thousand feet above the plain a few miles away.

There is no regular bazaar, but the workshops of metal and leather workers innumerable may be found in the by-roads and there are plenty of Chinese stores. But the most convenient place for those who wish to buy native handiwork is the Arts and Crafts Exhibition, near the Grand Hotel, a semi-official emporium, where all the articles are labelled at a fixed price. The favourite purchases seem to be *batik* work—for Djokja is the centre of *batik*

industry—and the *kris* or native dagger. In *batik* work the principle of etching is applied to cotton cloth. When dipped into the dye-tub the material is protected by a covering of wax, those portions of the pattern that are to be coloured being allowed to absorb the liquor, and the process is repeated again and again until the whole design is completed. The finished fabric is made into various articles, such as a tea-cosy or cushion cover, but most of it is used as a *sârong* or a head-dress. But for the *batik* *sârong* and the *batik* turban the attire of the natives would lack much in artistry.

The *kris* that is worn in the belt by even the most humble of the Javanese adds to their barbaric aspect. But these weapons usually are of recent manufacture and of little value. A genuine old *kris* of eighteenth century handicraft with veined blade and carved ivory handle is a possession to be desired but not always easy to acquire. Often enough the Chinese vendor will palm off some modern article upon the unwary purchaser while charging him for a real antique.

After seeing the modern palace it is usual to pay a visit to the old palace of the Sultans, a ruined fortress built in the middle of the eighteenth century, known as the Tamansari or Water Castle. An earthquake was responsible for its dilapidation sixty years ago. Originally, the palace stood in the midst of a lake, the only entrance being through a subterranean passage; and legend declares that it was possible to submerge the whole building beneath the water when the Sultan needed to use it as a place of refuge.

It is approached still by a dark underground tunnel, at the end of which a steep flight of stairs leads up into the principal chambers. It must have been an uncomfortable dwelling-place, most of the rooms being gloomy and cavernous. The walls drip with moisture and are covered with moss and lichen. Everything is cold and dank and dismal. Even the banqueting-hall—the least unpleasant of the various apartments—is lighted only by an aperture

in the roof; while the Sultan's bedroom, which contains the stone couch where the monarch used to sleep, is a horrible dungeon. Nevertheless, when the visitor stands outside upon one of the topmost towers and looks down over the irregular grey walls, flecked with green and golden shadows from the tall encircling trees that have choked the moat and are nodding around the battlements, he will find a certain beauty in the crumbling old palace.

One evening a company of native players gave a performance in the hall of the Grand Hotel. The Javanese are born actors and love to watch a theatrical show. On this occasion the drama appeared to be divided into four scenes. It commenced with the entrance of a girl in a black skirt and a green gauze shawl, with smooth glossy hair and a white powdered face, who made graceful play with her arms and fingers but caterwauled horribly when she sang. Then, two young men appeared, whose only attire was a glittering head-dress and bespangled trousers, and sought apparently to win the affections of the lady by fantastic leg-play and other blandishments. But she was disdainful and spurned them. A couple of clowns monopolized most of the third scene, one tall and thin, the other short and squat, the latter bearing an odd resemblance in eyes and mouth and moustache and figure to Mr. H. G. Wells, a make-up that can scarcely have been done on purpose. During the superabundance of cross-talk and tumbling that ensued the impersonator of Mr. Wells seemed to get the worst of it. In the final tableau two fierce warriors with red cheeks and a huge black moustache engaged in a terrific battle, alarming the heroine so greatly that she wrapped her green scarf around her face and fled headlong from the stage. The two young men also fought one another and the tall clown kept on knocking down the short clown, the scene ending in a general brawl.

One of these poor Javanese clowns happened to carry a tiny paper American flag in his belt, which caused great

offence to an American spectator. It was an insult to the Stars and Stripes, he protested, and he threatened to speak to the American Consul about it. However, he was turned from his dire purpose upon being told that the actor merely wished to show which nation in the world he admired the most.

The native orchestra that played at intervals during the performance was composed of a miscellaneous collection of instruments. There was a drum, a single-string fiddle, several large gongs and two or three specimens of the *gambelan*, a species of metal xylophone, consisting of graduated bowls, or cymbals or slabs of brass. The music was sweet and haunting with a weird melody of its own.

An American lady, who was travelling round the world with two pretty daughters, sat by my side while the play was going on and made me her confidant. Her trouble, it appeared, was young men, all of whom were "crazy to play with the girls" as soon as they saw them. The most pertinacious, she declared, belonged to the Standard Oil and American Express companies, and she told me a story of a visit to a cinema at Singapore from which her daughters did not return until one o'clock in the morning. In the opinion of this American lady Standard Oil and American Express were synonyms of youthful audacity. In order to console her I pointed out that her experiences were nothing to what the future had in store when she arrived amongst the English officers in India.

An editor from Chicago, who was sitting in the next chair, endorsed my opinion and proceeded to inform us that a man friend of his once upon a time agreed to chaperon two beautiful nieces to Cairo when their mother was prevented from accompanying them. Although this American uncle was a big strong fellow the ordeal was almost too much for him. He got the girls home safely in the end, but it was touch and go all the time; and he used to harrow his friends afterward

by describing his state of mind at the prospect of returning to America alone and telling his sister that he had lost her daughters. He was a limp shadow of his former self when he staggered off the steamer at New York.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### BATAVIA AND THE WEST

**O**WING to a misapprehension I returned to Batavia through the lowlands via Cheribon instead of travelling to Garoet and Bandoeng through the Preanger highlands. It was a long, hot, dusty railway journey, lasting from 6.38 a.m. until 4.40 p.m. If the windows of the compartment were left open everything was covered with soot from the engine; if the windows were closed the heat was suffocating in spite of the electric fans. During most of the day they had to remain shut owing to persistent rainstorms. At every station crowds of coolies were allowed to rush into the first-class carriages, clamouring for luggage, an unnecessary nuisance, which oddly enough the orderly Dutch have not taken the trouble to suppress.

The first impression of the Hotel des Indes at Weltevreden is confirmed by a residence of a few days. Although proclaimed in its prospectus as "most attractive for its extensive pavilion system, guaranteeing absolute privacy," little tranquillity is to be found there. A nurse used to promenade along the tiled passage in front of my veranda all morning with a perambulator containing two vociferous infants, while a child in the "pavilion" opposite was practising scales on the piano. Many of the residents possessed gramophones, and cars were driving through the grounds at all hours to the various annexes. But the charges are moderate. My bill was only 11.50 guilders *en pension*, or about a pound a day. And the bedroom and the little portico sitting-room could not have been



improved. Pens and ink and writing-paper were provided in abundance.

The most unique feature of Dutch cuisine is the *Rysttafel*, or Rice Table, which is provided at luncheon time, and, like the *bouillabaisse* of Marseilles, is a meal in itself. No other course is necessary afterwards. Every guest is provided with an empty soup plate and, after a pile of boiled rice has been heaped upon it, the ceremony begins. A loud clapping of hands is heard at the far end of the dining-hall and a long procession of waiters advances down the room in single file, each bearing a large dish. The first offers curried chicken, fried salmon may follow, then possibly something resembling a kipper; and afterwards there is a succession of heterogeneous *plats*—fried eggs, perhaps, an omelette, morsels of beef and duck and mutton, innumerable platters containing unfamiliar messes—a dozen of them or more, from each of which you are expected to take an ample helping. Finally, the usual concomitants of a Malay curry arrive, chutney and grated coco-nut, ground chilis and little squares of pine-apple, served in a porcelain tray divided into compartments. In the end the soup plate contains a huge pyramid of food and one is surrounded by little brown men in striped blue pyjamas and *batik* turbans.

Since this succulent meal is the time-honoured luncheon of the Dutch residents it is not surprising that many of them are inclined to obesity. At the Hotel des Indes I saw what must have been the fattest little girl in the whole of Netherlands India, the daughter of an almost equally well-nourished mother. When the *Rysttafel* was served the child's portion, like Benjamin's mess, was larger than any other. It is strange that more fruit is not provided and fewer meat courses, but unfortunately this is not the custom in hotels in the East notwithstanding the abundance of fruit in the market-place. Even in Singapore where the delicious mangosteen is in season during the whole of the winter it seldom appears at the table d'hôte.

Most tropical fruits are inferior to those of temperate

climes, but the mangosteen is an exception. All the world is, and always has been, unanimous in its praise. It is about the size of a russet apple, purple in colour, having a thick rind, which breaks easily. Inside there is a white ball, divided into segments and resembling a tangerine orange. In flavour it has been likened to a combination of peach and pine-apple and certainly it is as exquisite as either.

Whatever error of diet they may commit when tempted by a *Rydstafel* the Javanese Dutch seem to be a fine and healthy people. The men are big stalwart fellows, clear of eye, and often have a fresh colour in their cheeks, the result of frequent visits to the hill-stations. Evidently, the tropical sun has no terrors for them since they all wear light straw hats. Judging from their appearance the women, too, can suffer no ill effects from the climate; and, although they do not play games as vigorously as the Englishwomen of Malaya, they ride long distances on a bicycle to do their shopping. Both sexes work hard, and the business hours seem longer even than in Saigon. Most of the shops are open until eight o'clock at night. In proportion to the population the number of officials is not excessive.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the white men are planters, the rest being traders in the towns. Unlike the French in Indo-China the Dutch in Java are really colonists.

They are a brave, cheerful, friendly people, with pleasant manners, but they have acquired two habits which they would do well to abandon. Many of them imitate the detestable example of Americans of the baser sort and linger at the breakfast-table in the dining-hall, puffing strong cigars, heedless of the discomfort they cause to people around them. From the Australians they have learnt, alas, to whistle, which is a national calamity, for, although the Dutchman comes of a musical race, he is the worst whistler in the world. Whistling has become a

<sup>1</sup> The Europeans in Java number between a hundred and forty to a hundred and fifty thousand. The native population is nearly 40,000,000. In Malaya there are only 15,000 white people.

Javanese vice. Even the Governor-General, a magnificent potentate, who is surrounded by all the panoply of royalty, has been seen walking in the grounds of his palace at Buitenzorg with his hands in his pockets, whistling like a schoolboy.

At the Hotel des Indes it is a common sight to see a blonde pink young Dutchman strolling through the hall, followed by a pretty dark wife and a couple of children, one of whom may be as fair as the father while the other has a complexion as brown as one of the Javanese waiters. The mother is a Eurasian, and, as happens frequently, there are evidences of atavism in the offspring. The half-castes in Java are far more numerous than the Europeans, for, in former days, when there were few white women in the island it was usual for every Dutchman to have a native wife or mistress. But, unlike the French in Indo-China, they have never allowed one of their women to mate with a native. In these days, apparently, the authorities do not encourage the intermarriage of the better-class Dutchman with the Javanese or Sundanese, and they have endeavoured with success to equalize the sexes among the Europeans. A girl can be married by proxy in Holland to a fellow-countryman in Java and upon her arrival in the colony no further legal ceremony is necessary. In some cases her outward passage is paid by the government. On the other hand the multiplication of the half-caste is encouraged by permitting Dutch soldiers to have Javanese concubines. Unfortunately, native women are proud of bearing Eurasian babies.

Whatever his origin the Eurasian is regarded officially as a European and enjoys all the privileges of a pure-bred Dutchman. Every branch of the civil service is open to him; he suffers no social stigma because of a "touch of the tar-brush." Many of the girls are extremely handsome. I asked Mr. Van der Hoek if he would approve of a Eurasian as a son-in-law or a daughter-in-law. He replied that he would have no objection at all, providing the young man or the young woman was a reputable member of

society; and he went on to assure me that many of the Eurasians are equal to the Dutch in every respect. Naturally, it is a question of lineage and upbringing. Those descended from good European stock and reared under the care of a watchful father often become distinguished citizens and hold high office.

Nevertheless, the majority of the half-castes are of an inferior class, having been chance children or the children of fathers who have returned to Holland. These resemble the beachcomber or the indigent whites in other tropical lands. Too idle for manual labour and clinging tenaciously to their status as Europeans, they live useless discontented lives and are likely to become a source of danger to the community. It was from this class that Pieter Erbeveld sprang, the traitor of "accursed memory." Yet, the Dutch, like the French, seem to believe that affinity of blood will always bind the Eurasians to the land of their fathers, unmindful of the experience of the Portuguese in Brazil, where intercourse with the natives produced a class of half-castes who broke away from the mother country. In one respect there will always be incompatibility between the Dutchman and the Eurasian. Usually, the former regards the colony as a temporary home and hopes to be able to return to the Netherlands eventually. To the Eurasian, however, Java is a fatherland and he has no other ambition than to live and die in the island where he was born. For this reason alone the existence of a large community of half-castes is a menace to the supremacy of Holland.

Since there are no Chinese coolies in Java there are no rickshaws. Their place is taken by gharries, of which there are two kinds—the *ebro* and the *sado*. The former resembles a victoria and is drawn by a pair of ponies with clean silver-plaited harness. It has cushioned seats and the charge is only half a crown an hour. The *sado* is a carriage on two wheels, not unlike a miniature dogcart, and with only one pony. The driver sits in front and the passenger has to balance himself on a narrow bench at the

back, a difficult task very often as the vehicle sways like a see-saw. It is patronized mostly by natives, for it costs only a guilder an hour.<sup>1</sup> There is a shortage of horse-drawn carriages because of the competition of the motor-car, an unfortunate state of affairs since a cheap mode of conveyance is essential owing to the absence of the rickshaw. Although taxi-cabs are not expensive they are not a cheap enough substitute. A noisy and lumbering trolley-car connects Old and New Batavia, traversing one of the roads that borders the banks of the canal, but with this base exception the streets of Weltevreden are undefiled by a single tramway.

With the coming of the Chinese New Year Old Batavia was *en fête*, people of every nationality joining in the festivities. The New Year's Day of 1926 fell on the 13th of February and during the two preceding nights a great fair was held in the native quarters. Every shop remained open from sunset to sunrise; the theatres and the cinemas gave a continuous performance; no Chinaman went to bed from Thursday morning until Saturday evening. After dinner on the first night Mr. Van der Hoek accompanied me to the Kali Basar to watch the spectacle, and we spent a couple of hours in wandering through the streets. Gaily-decked booths had been erected everywhere, lit by coloured lanterns and festooned with flags. All the gewgaws of the cheap-jack, both from the East and the West, seemed to be exposed for sale on the stalls. Every Chinese woman was arrayed in her best and loaded with cheap jewellery, happy, chattering, smiling creatures in the most joyful holiday mood imaginable. Amongst the heterogeneous headgear of the Celestial the velveteen pork-pie hat of the Malays was to be seen in great numbers intermingled with the variegated turbans of the Javanese. An immense multitude thronged the streets, but perfect order prevailed and it was evident that the Commissioner of Police had no cause for anxiety.

Earlier in the day I had seen another interesting spectacle,

<sup>1</sup> A guilder is worth 16. 8d. in English money.

having spent the morning at the Sea Water Aquarium, situated in the Pasar Ikan, or Fish Market, on the banks of the canal. It seemed to me that it must excel all other collections in the world, but travellers tell me that the aquarium at Madras contains a larger and more wonderful display. The exhibition in Batavia possesses two big tanks and four smaller ones, which are filled with the most amazing specimens of fish from the coral islands of the Indian Ocean. Fish of all shapes and sizes, and as brilliant in colour as a Brazilian butterfly, are flitting through the water on the other side of the plate glass. It seems as though one were gazing into an aviary of beautiful birds.

Some of these fish are strange objects. Both the forceps fish and the white collar fish are as broad as long, like the sun-fish, and as flat as the bream, the former being silver with vivid orange rings and dark spots, the latter having an olive body and a white collar round its neck, a black snout and a crimson tail. The yellow-finned butterfly fish is even more surprising, for a long pennant attached to its dorsal fin streams behind it as it darts along. Its body is snow white with jet-black bands, and its fins are of the brightest gold. Equally resplendent is the royal fish with its chocolate body and glittering blue stripes, built on the lines of the bream like the three others. Of more conventional shape but even more brilliant in colouring are the red-neck wrasse, the bird of paradise wrasse and the parrot wrasse, all "butterfly fishes" from the coral reefs of Insulinde.

Having come from Djokja to Weltevreden by the wrong route it was necessary for me to return inland in order to visit places that I had missed. The first part of my journey was to Buitenzorg, the oldest hill-station in the island and the principal residence of the Governor-General. Fast trains arrive there in little over an hour, for it is not more than twenty miles by rail from the capital. Although only nine hundred feet above sea-level the air feels cool and fresh in contrast to the heat of the plains. Being the headquarters of officialdom as well as a favourite

health-resort Buitenzorg has a large Dutch population. The bungalows are as handsome as those of Weltevreden, with greener and more luxuriant gardens.

Nothing could be more delightful than the position of the appropriately named Hotel Belle Vue, the principal hotel in the little town. Perched on the edge of a ravine it commands a view far over a superb landscape. In the gorge below, the Tjidani river sweeps in a clear swift torrent between high banks fringed with groves of palms and bamboos. Beyond the river, an expanse of waving treetops stretches for miles across the plain, merging at last in the wooded slopes of the mountains. In the distance, outlined clearly against the horizon, the crater of the gigantic Salak lifts its jagged crest above the clouds. But often, during most of the day, the great volcano is hidden in mist, being visible only at sunrise and sunset.

On the other side of the hotel a broad road slopes in a gradual ascent for about a quarter of a mile to the main entrance of the famous Botanical Gardens. On passing through the gates the visitor finds himself beneath a high archway of green branches, formed by an avenue of huge kanari trees, the crests of which meet a hundred feet overhead. This cool tunnel leads to a small lake, whose surface is covered with lotus leaves and whose brink is bordered by stretches of lawn, at the extremity of which stands the palace of the Governor-General. Turning to the right one reaches a monument erected to the memory of Lady Raffles, the first wife of Sir Stamford Raffles, who died at Batavia in 1814. The gardens extend on all sides as far as the eye can see.

Although the Dutch government possesses the most comprehensive collection of tropical plants and flowers and forest trees in the world at Buitenzorg, the gardens themselves excite more wonder for their size and magnificence than admiration of their beauty. Everything seems on too vast a scale; one is overwhelmed by the luxuriance of the surroundings. A great part of the grounds is occupied by a dense forest, where the boughs and foliage of giant

trees create a perpetual twilight and one wanders on in a maze through dark interminable pathways. Festoons of strange tropical creepers coil around the trunks and branches, and the serpentine roots of the ferns and the mangrove enclose impenetrable thickets of palm-ferns and bamboos. Every arboreal specimen from all the islands of the Dutch Indies has a place in the jungle.

It is disappointing not to behold an accumulated display of tropical flowers, and one misses the riot of colouring that is the glory of the gardens of Singapore. Clusters of bougainvillæa and blossoms of frangipani may be seen here and there, but the orchids are hidden away in dark groves or are concealed beneath protective coverings. It must be remembered, however, that the Buitenzorg gardens exist for utility and are not merely a pleasure-ground.

Any one who carries a camera is sure to be accosted frequently by small native girls with the insistent cry of "Pictur-pictur," every child being eager to pose for a photograph for the sake of a few cents as recompense. And these children in their white vests and printed sârongs, with their kind, solemn brown faces, are usually very attractive little figures indeed.

Buitenzorg is the chief centre of agricultural education in Java, and there is an agricultural college, where pupils are instructed in tropical farming and are trained as government instructors. On the other side of the river a seed garden of two hundred acres adjoins the Botanical Gardens, and here experiments are made in the selection and acclimatization of the various plants. Both the college and the experimental garden are administered by the Department of Agriculture.

The great white palace of the Governor-General, the façade of which faces the lotus pond and the Botanical Gardens, is surrounded on all other sides by an extensive park. It is skirted by the road leading from the hotel to the station, and, looking through the railings, one is surprised to see a herd of deer grazing on the thick herbage







or resting beneath the trees. The Governor-General, whose salary is as large as that of the Viceroy of India, wraps himself up in awful state. Etiquette insists that he shall be as inaccessible and unapproachable as officialdom can make him; and the unlucky folks who have to seek audience with His Excellency must appear before him in a black suit. Apparently, the appointment is a political one rather than a reward of distinguished service, and the present holder of the office was formerly a solicitor of moderate practice in one of the Dutch towns.

It takes about five hours to travel by rail from Buitenzorg to Bandoeng, the capital of the Preanger Regencies, which usually is the next stopping-place in a journey through the island. The train is climbing nearly all the way, passing through one of the richest agricultural districts in Java, the country of tea, rubber and tobacco plantations, with the ubiquitous rice-fields set out in terraces as far as the highest hilltops. No continual jungle covers the mountains as in Malaya; there is intensive cultivation everywhere. Soon after the highlands are reached a halt is made at the little town of Soekaboeni, a favourite health resort with the people of Batavia, and then, having descended a few hundred feet, the railway line begins to mount higher once more, traversing a mountainous region, intersected by deep ravines and precipitous watercourses, as it approaches the lofty plateau of the Preangers.

Bandoeng is a considerable city, having a population of 11,000 Europeans and 100,000 natives. Although blatantly modern, it is an imposing place with many splendid buildings, and, judging from its appearance, might be a prosperous holiday town in southern Europe. Situated 2300 feet above the sea in the midst of a fertile plain and surrounded by high mountains it has a bracing climate and a beautiful environment. In the Hotel Preanger it possesses one of the most sumptuous hotels in Java, where there are respectable bathrooms with hot and cold water.

It is a progressive city, owing its prosperity to government establishments and to several lucrative manufactures. Chief of these is the quinine factory, owned by private enterprise, which draws its supplies from the numerous cinchona plantations that are scattered throughout the neighbouring country. Most of the world's consumption of quinine comes from Java and the finest qualities of the drug are produced in the factory at Bandoeng. The city is the seat of the native regent, who, like the Sultan of Djokjakarta, is subservient to a Dutch Resident. The presence of officialdom adds to the importance of the locality.

It is usual to tarry in the Preanger Regencies, for it is one of the most interesting parts of the island, and Bandoeng is an appropriate place from which to travel to the numerous beauty spots in the neighbourhood. But my time was short and I had to hurry back to Batavia to catch a steamer. Although my stay in Java had lasted only a fortnight—an absurd period for a visit to such a wonderful island—I had not made the mistake of trying to see too much and had divided the time between three convenient centres.

Setting aside the admiration which must be aroused by the natural beauty of the island there are two impressions that a casual visitor will take away from Java. He will carry in his mind the memory of a great European population—which seems larger than it is because so many Eurasians are almost white—and he will recollect that nearly all the important towns have a European appearance. In this respect the island differs from Ceylon, Malaya and Indo-China, where Western civilization seems less manifest than that of the East. Having plenty of money for the construction of his cities the Dutchman has spent it lavishly. No mawkish sentimentality has led him to withhold comfort and hygiene from his fellow-countrymen in order to pamper the native inhabitants. The welfare of the ruling race has been his first consideration.

It is this habit of self-assertion that has caused many travellers to believe that the Dutch in the past have been unjust and tyrannical to the people of Insulinde. Many of the accounts of Java, written by foreigners in recent times, contain suggestions, more or less emphatic, that the natives have been exploited and kept in subjection. A false tradition has been created, which has not yet been dissipated entirely, and the official Dutchman remains a legendary figure—a species of Simon Legree—typical of ruthless oppression. Still, whatever errors have been committed by Holland in the past, there is little that the most fastidious political reformer can censure in her present conduct towards her colonies. Most of the British and American authors, who have made books about Java, obviously have been swayed by envy or prejudice; and intruders such as these are entitled to no more credit as critics of Netherlands India than we should give to those who bear false witness against our own country. A writer of alien origin and alien outlook, like Michael Arlen or Bernard Shaw, is not accepted as a just chronicler of social life in England.

In every Dutch lavatory, the visitor will find—much to his surprise—a dozen or more wine-bottles filled with fresh water, arranged in orderly rows on the floor in one of the corners of the apartment. It appears that *aqua pura* in this form is one of the necessities of the Dutchman's existence. If it is not there he is never happy till he gets it. Thus, when the British government sent a large P. & O. liner to Tandjong-Priok soon after the armistice as a compliment to the authorities of Java, who were short of transport, the British Consul-General at Batavia was much perturbed by the discovery that the ship possessed no empty bottles. There were plenty of full ones, containing gallons of the choicest wines and spirits, but not half a dozen empties could be found anywhere.

"They'll have to use the tap," declared the captain.

"We must get them bottles," protested the worried Consul-General. "They can't do without them."

And because of this racial idiosyncrasy a resentful purser was obliged to scour Batavia for a couple of days to buy a stock of empty bottles.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A GLIMPSE OF SUMATRA

THE ship in which I quitted Java was the famous *Plancius*, a twin-screw vessel of 6000 tons, which its owners, the K.P.M., declare to be "the finest steamer afloat in Eastern waters."

Painted white, with graceful yacht-like lines and two promenade decks built above the main deck, it looks as handsome a ship as can be imagined. In construction it is a larger and more luxurious facsimile of the *Melchior Treub*, having more spacious saloons and a better cuisine. Setting out from Sourabaja in Java it makes a call at the port of Batavia, and, after reaching Singapore two days later, it proceeds up the Straits of Malacca to Belawan-Deli in the north-east of Sumatra, a voyage of about 1500 miles. Wishing to see something of Sumatra, where I should be able to stay for the better part of two days, I decided to make the complete journey and return with the *Plancius* to Singapore.

On the advice of rapacious agents, who hinted that in all probability the ship would be crowded, I had paid for a passage and a half in order to secure a stateroom to myself. To my great surprise, however, the purser sought me out soon after we had left port and repudiated the transaction.

"It is ridiculous that we should charge you anything extra," he protested. "If the ship had been full it would have been another matter, but she is nearly empty. I shall return you 75 guilders."

And he handed me a bundle of notes.

Never before to my knowledge has a steamship

company acted with such munificence, and it seems to me that the generosity of the Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij should be placed on record. In England we have learnt to admire the integrity of our neighbours in Holland, but in our eastern colonies, where commercial competition with Netherlands India is strenuous, too much credence is attached to a familiar quotation.

“In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch  
Is giving too little and asking too much.”

This was not my experience of the Dutchman of Insulinde.

While the *Plancius* was alongside the quay at Tandjong Priok before the voyage had begun it was curious to watch the crowds of natives that were streaming up the gangway into the steerage quarters. All of them were coolies bound for the rubber and tobacco plantations in Sumatra, where they serve as indentured labourers for a period of eighteen months. Miserable tatterdemalions for the most part, they appeared to be drawn from the dregs of the population. A few carried their belongings in a small paper parcel, but some had nothing but a bottle of mineral water. The majority seemed to be dressed in dirty rags. About two thousand on an average emigrate to Belawan-Deli every month, so one of the ship's officers told me, and they earn high wages and are well cared for, as there is a shortage of labour in Sumatra. When their period of service terminates they return to Java in affluence.

Leaving Tandjong Priok on a Saturday afternoon the *Plancius* reached Singapore on Monday morning, in time for those who wished to breakfast at an hotel, and proceeded on her voyage about midday. The passage through the Straits of Malacca, where the sea as usual was like a millpond, lasted for another twenty-four hours, and about noon the ship was berthed alongside the quay at Belawan-Deli. Here the Dutch have made a fine harbour with extensive wharfs and enormous store-sheds, where vessels



of 12,000 tons can be accommodated. Many physical difficulties have been overcome, for the port lies far up the estuary of a shallow river where a channel had to be dredged through shifting mud-banks for several miles.

The town of Medan, the capital of eastern Sumatra and the seat of government, which is situated twelve miles from the port, is connected with Belawan by railway. The charge for a motor-car is only 12 guilders, and the road is dusty, although pleasant to the eye, passing through tropical shrubberies almost the whole way. Medan is not a big town, but evidently prosperous. The buildings in the business quarter are new and substantial; and its principal street—the Kesawan—contains some large stores and many excellent shops. In the well-planned suburbs, where palm trees border the roads, most of the bungalows appear to have been built in recent years and all of them stand in the midst of delightful gardens. Beautiful hibiscus hedges in full flower flourish everywhere, growing higher than those in Malaya for they are left untrimmed. Since the Chinese coolie abounds there are plenty of rickshaws. Motor-car horns make an incessant din, as they do in other Dutch towns.

The Hotel de Boer, which is regarded as the best hotel, has a well-chosen site in front of the principal "plein." The food is good, without any Dutch dishes, which is due to the fact that the *chef* is a Swiss, there being a small colony of Swiss in Medan. All the bedrooms are provided with an inner chamber made of gauze-wire, supposed to be mosquito proof, which contains the bed and is entered through a gauze-wire door. Metal perhaps is necessary as a protection, for Medan mosquitoes are renowned for their biting-power. The town has a reputation for great heat, which seemed to be justified, as the thermometer stood at more than 90° in the shade until after sunset.

On the day of my arrival it happened to be Planters'

day, which falls on the 1st and 16th of every month, a general holiday on the rubber estates when the planters and their womenfolk flock into Medan to do their shopping and to meet their friends. The ladies dress well and expensively, a proof of the affluence of the country and the enterprise of the Medan *modiste*. Every room in the place had been booked long in advance and dances were given in the evening at the hotels, but the festivities last only for one night, as the planters have to return to work on the following morning. Many of them are English and there are a certain number of Americans.

A short drive into the great plain that surrounds the town affords evidence of the richness and prosperity of the country. In addition to the rubber estates, which have the advantage of a climate almost as favourable as that of Malaya, there are vast fields of tobacco; and, although this agriculture has declined in recent years, the huge barns for drying the plant, which are numerous still, indicate that its cultivation is extensive. After producing a crop the land lies fallow for several years. One is often told that the Deli leaf is used for the covering of the best Havanna cigars, being a tough leaf without any holes. This is untrue. No Sumatra tobacco reaches Cuba, for it is all absorbed in the markets of Amsterdam and New York.

In addition to the Planters' day ball there was also a public dinner at the Hotel de Boer on the evening of my arrival, given by the Swiss residents of Medan. A concert took place afterwards, and many people like myself, who had not been bidden to the feast, sat on the open veranda outside the windows of the dining-hall, listening to the music. It was a still, dark night, and the shadows of the palm leaves, outlined on the stone flags by the electric lamps, were not stirred by a flicker. Presently, I became conscious of the faint patter of tiny, crawling feet—a sound that I had heard last while sitting upon the stoop in the Karroo—and a big black scorpion glided swiftly



RIVER IN SUMATRA



past my chair. As I followed to stamp on the thing it disappeared into a deep gutter at the edge of the veranda, but in the glare of the lights overhead I could see that the foolish creature had stopped still. By my side stood a tub containing a fern-palm in which there happened to be some heavy stones and taking one of them I dropped it down. It was impossible to miss my aim, so there was one less scorpion in the world. Killing is no murder in the case of such pests. The only other poisonous insect that I saw in the East was an eight-inch centipede that was creeping down the front doorsteps as I was leaving a house in Penang.

On the following morning I discovered that it was possible to visit Brastagi and return in time to catch the *Plancius*, for the distance is only seventy miles and a car does the double journey in less than six hours. Although my chauffeur persisted in taking me to see everything that I had seen on the previous afternoon—the show-places of the neighbourhood, such as the racecourse, a handsome mosque, the Sultan's Palace and the Sultan's Harem—we seemed to go little out of our way, and arrived at our destination soon after eleven o'clock. During more than half the drive we were traversing the great plain, but the road climbed steeply afterwards when we began to mount into the hills.

Brastagi is 4900 feet above the sea and has a healthy climate. Along with Fort de Kock in the Padang highlands, which lies more than five hundred miles to the south, it is the most famous sanatorium in Sumatra. In the daytime the thermometer mounts into the seventies, but it falls below sixty at night, which in the tropics means that a fire and blankets are desirable. The little town has a beautiful situation in a well-wooded plateau amidst a circle of high mountains, some of which are volcanic. It boasts a nine-hole golf-course and has two chalet-like hotels, the Brastagi and the Belvedere, reputed to be comfortable. Naturally, the people of Malaya find the place a godsend, for it is the

only hill-station within convenient reach, and it owes its developments largely to their patronage.<sup>1</sup> The gardens produce European fruits and vegetables in abundance.

It was with much regret that now I realized it was possible—if I had a fortnight to spare—to make a tour of fifteen hundred miles through the most beautiful parts of Sumatra, travelling by car nearly all the way. Proceeding from Brastagi one drives over the mountains across the island to the seaport of Sibolga, continuing the journey along the chain of hills down the western coast as far as the Padang highlands, where the natives build the *batak* houses with quaint horned roofs. Then, since there are no roads between the ports of Padang and Benkoelan, a short sea-voyage is necessary; but at Benkoelan one takes to a car again to cross another range of mountains to the upper reaches of the great Moesi river, the largest river in the island. The rest of the journey is made in a stern-wheeler, a voyage of about forty-eight hours, down stream to Palembang, the chief commercial town on the south-east coast of Sumatra. Thence it is easy to reach Singapore or Batavia in a K.P.M. steamer. A tour of Sumatra is little less arduous than a tour of Java and the country is as interesting and beautiful. On the present occasion, however, it was impossible to remain even in Brastagi longer than a few minutes.

Back once more in Medan in time for a late lunch I reached Belawan-Deli soon after 3 o'clock, an hour before the *Plancius* left the harbour. There was much bustle and excitement on the quayside, for scores of Javanese coolies were returning home after completing their term of service on the rubber estates. Since their arrival in Sumatra they had undergone a wonderful metamorphosis. Having saved money all the time they were now small capitalists. Instead of the shabby rabble that one had seen at the port of Batavia every one of those

<sup>1</sup> About twenty-eight hours by steamer and car from Singapore.

who came on board was a native "knot" in the smartest raiment. In place of shambling wretches with hang-dog faces the crowd was composed of jaunty fellows with swinging strides and joyful laughter. Many carried a big tin trunk upon their heads; others bore a brand-new bicycle upon their shoulders. And their women were decked out in sârongs of the brightest colours, pink and blue and yellow, fluttering groups of gay little creatures, who tramped merrily up the gangway with baskets of fruit in their hands or laden with large paper parcels.

The Dutch have a pleasant custom when they bid good-bye to departing friends. Both at Tandjong Priok and Belawan-Deli numbers of people came on board the *Plancius* with bouquets and garlands of flowers for those who were going away, the men as well as the women. At each port the deck of the ship resembled a florist's shop. Among those who were leaving Sumatra for a visit to Batavia was the son of the Sultan of Medan, a youth with a yellow plush fez, attended by a crowd of little brown men, whose head-gear displayed most of the colours of the rainbow. Unfortunately, His Highness's cabin happened to be next to mine, for the cigarettes that he smoked incessantly were extremely pungent and he was a sonorous sleeper. In the middle of the night, too, when the ship slowed down in order not to reach port before daybreak he imagined that a disaster had occurred and shouted in panic for his A.D.C. For some reason the ship always takes one night longer to pass through the straits on the voyage back to Java. So we did not arrive at Singapore until Friday morning.

An extraordinary accident had occurred a short time before during one of the voyages of the *Plancius*. It happened to a Dutch girl, who was travelling alone, between Singapore and Belawan-Deli. She had occupied a single stateroom on the main deck, where all the cabins have large square windows instead of portholes; and in the

morning when the steamer had come into harbour it was discovered that she was missing. They searched the ship from stem to stern, but the young lady could not be found anywhere. It was evident that she had gone overboard in the night, and wireless messages were sent out to every vessel in the straits, although there seemed no hope that she was alive.

Nevertheless, she had been rescued. After falling into the sea through losing her balance while looking out of the window she managed to keep afloat for several hours, eking out her strength by lying on her back. Although the Straits of Malacca swarms with sharks and she was a poor swimmer, no shark happened to come her way and she continued to struggle on, alternatively floating and treading water. At last, toward daybreak, she was picked up by a Chinese fishing-boat little the worse for her adventure. The crew, however, refused to take her at once to the nearest port in spite of her entreaties. Having come out to catch fish they could not be induced to return until their task was finished. Thus, it was not until the next evening that the poor girl was landed at Singapore, where she was put into hospital. Yet, her physique was so robust that she was discharged two days later. Exposure and exhaustion had not affected her in the least. The doctors had found nothing amiss with her except sunburn, for she was wearing only a silk chemise and the fishing-boat had no awning.

Meanwhile, long before it was known that she had been saved, strange rumours were being circulated at Belawan-Deli. The police and the newspaper reporters had flocked on board, and between them they had formulated a theory to account for the accident. When the contents of the girl's cabin were overhauled three things only were found to be missing—the girl herself, the chemise that she had taken with her and a small hand-mirror from her dressing-bag. Hence, the preposterous hypothesis of the journalists and the detectives. A newly-married



couple had occupied the adjoining cabin, and it was surmised that the young woman while using her looking-glass, periscope fashion, to spy upon her neighbours, had tumbled through the open window into the water. The story passed from lip to lip, finding its way eventually into the Javanese press.

Shortly before my departure from Singapore I was told that the intrepid girl was bringing an action for libel against one of the leading newspapers of Batavia.

Many Englishmen envy Holland the possession of Java, remembering that once it belonged to our country by right of conquest. By far the richest island in the Indian Ocean it would have been more valuable to us than many territories upon which we have lavished blood and treasure. Yet, for my part, I have no regrets that we own Java no longer. It is improbable that we could have administered the colony more successfully than the Dutch, while it is certain that we should not have managed the natives so cleverly. Since the island lies outside our principal trade routes its possession would have done little to strengthen our possessions in the East, and it might have been an embarrassment politically. The presence of a strong Dutch colonial empire in Insulinde always has been an integral part of our imperial policy.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, I do covet Sumatra. Owing to its geographical situation the island is the complement of Malaya, with a similar climate and a like sparsity of population. In the hands of England it would have consolidated our power in southern Asia. Six times the size of Java, its soil is equally fertile and in all probability its mineral wealth is enormous. So far its development has been retarded by lack of labour, which the Dutch can supply only in limited quantities, but Great Britain could

<sup>1</sup> On this account Holland is under everlasting obligations to our country. But for the good-will of Great Britain and the British fleet there would be no Netherlands India. Probably our motives are not disinterested. The Dutch are less embarrassing neighbours than the French or the Germans.

provide in abundance from the teeming millions of India. If Sumatra had remained a British colony since Raffles took possession of it there is no doubt that it would have become a richer and more prosperous Malaya. It is sad to remember that our claims upon the island were renounced little more than fifty years ago.

## CHAPTER XXV

### WESTWARD BOUND

THE ship in which I travelled from Singapore to Colombo was the *Jan Pieterszoon Coen*, a liner of 12,000 tons belonging to the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland,<sup>1</sup> named after a famous Governor of Batavia in the early seventeenth century. On the whole it is the most comfortable and well-appointed vessel in the Eastern seas, excelling the latest boats of the Orient and P. & O. Companies and rivalling even the *Plancius*. The officers, like all officers on Dutch ships, are anxious to please their passengers and will try to remedy any grievance, however frivolous. Although their patience often must be sorely tried, their kindness and courtesy never seems to waver. No wonder that the Dutch liners on both the South American and the South Asiatic routes have become popular with English travellers.

The meals resemble those in a first-class restaurant on shore, one dish only being served at each course; and while the menu offers a sufficient selection, there is none of the superabundance that is so nauseating on an English liner. All the stewards are Javanese, painstaking and incompetent, but the purser and the deck steward always come into the dining-hall at meal-times to assist the *maitre d'hôtel*, and their drill-sergeant methods produce a most efficient service. Tea is served on deck at small tables, a separate pot being provided for each party however small, an arrangement that pleases the women.

<sup>1</sup> Nederland Royal Mail Company.

Outside the doors of the smoking-room and the social-hall a notice appears—"verboden voor kinderen"—but in spite of the prohibition children invade both places without hindrance. It was usual to see a mother with a child in each hand pausing on the threshold for a moment to gaze up at the writing on the wall; and then, after having realized its significance, she would drag both her offspring into the smoking-room. *Kinderen*, however, are much more agreeable than *enfants*. Their parents allow them to remain in the forbidden saloons only as long as they behave themselves. If they begin to whine and whimper or play at hide-and-seek amongst the furniture, they are either sent out on deck or taken to the maternal stateroom to be dealt with according to the magnitude of the offence. Since the ship was not full, it was reasonable to allow the *kinderen* some licence. When the ship is crowded, rules are observed more strictly.

My cabin was on a lower deck, a three-berth cabin with no other occupant, but unfortunately it was next door to the common-room where the native stewards had their habitation. They carried on a perpetual chattering all day and were shuffling along the passage incessantly. The Javanese nursemaids, too, were allowed to invade their room, an objectionable custom which the orderly Dutch ought to abolish on all their liners. When I complained to the purser he acknowledged that my cabin was the worst on the ship and promised to let me have another after we had left Belawan. He kept his word, giving me one of the best on board, a splendid stateroom with two outer walls on the promenade deck. There was no extra charge, the change being made as a matter of course, without fuss or favour.

We reached Belawan-Deli<sup>1</sup> at noon on the next day—my sixth passage through the Straits of Malacca in four months—and remained along the quayside until the following morning, loading cargo. The officers receive a

<sup>1</sup> Belawan-Deli is 354 miles from Singapore.

bonus on the amount embarked, so take care not to leave anything behind. In the present instance the cargo consisted of cases of rubber and tobacco, neat square boxes with metal-protected edges. Although there would have been time to drive to Brastagi and back before dark none of the passengers took advantage of the opportunity. In the evening, however, there was an exodus to Medan, where a ball was in progress at the Hotel de Boer.

Next morning before breakfast the ship called at Sabang, a small island that lies 28 miles north-west of Sumatra, for the purpose of coaling. Here there is one of the prettiest land-locked harbours imaginable, and when the *Jan Pieterszoon Coen* had arrived at the landing-stage we seemed to be lying on the shore of a lake with blunt, tree-clad hills on every side. Most of the European bungalows are built upon a low cliff with splendid views over the fiord. Two clubs and a cinema provide the inhabitants with amusement. The island has little importance except as a coaling-station, but it produces a certain amount of pepper and copra. Many of the passengers went off in cars and gharries to a fresh-water pool, where there is a bathing-place.

Four days later we had entered Colombo harbour, a distance of 1588 miles from Singapore. It is a splendid harbour, protected on every side by breakwaters, the last of which was finished shortly before the war. But, beyond the excellence of the roadstead, Colombo has no reason to be proud of its port. In all its arrangements it is hopelessly out of date and inefficient. A quarter of a century ago passengers and cargo were disembarked in launches and in lighters. This uneconomic method is in use still.

During the winter I had put into many harbours in various steamships. At almost every one, small as well as great, the vessel was able to run alongside the quay. Singapore and Saigon, Sourabaja, Belawan and little Sabang—even Phnom-Penh and Port Swettenham—all

have used money and brains to construct adequate wharfs, where ocean-going ships can be berthed with ease. Although as rich as, or richer than any of these, Colombo has preferred to remain decadent and second-rate. None of the great ports of Asia have made less progress in the course of twenty-five years. Vested interests, I am told, stand in the way of improvement. Whatever is the cause of the crime some one ought to be hanged for it.

An idea may be conceived of the waste and extravagance that takes place in Colombo harbour when it is realized that every ton of merchandise has to be landed in barges and put on board ship in the same way. Instead of transferring the cargo from the ship's hold to the dock side by means of a steam crane a gang of coolies has the double task of loading it on to a lighter and unloading it again on to the quay. In the tiny port of Sabang electric transporters are used for purposes of coaling, performing their work at one operation. In Colombo harbour the same job has to be done twice over by hand labour.

The disembarkment of passengers is almost as slow and even more ignominious. Miserable little steam-launches, manned by predatory Ceylonese, ply between the liner and the jetty, inadequate in number and often of doubtful cleanliness. Thanks to the enterprise of Messrs. Thomas Cook & Son it is possible to convey luggage to an hotel quickly and at little expense, but, if Cook's ceased to exist it is difficult to imagine how a trunk could arrive safely on shore. The traveller, of course, has to land without his belongings, and upon reaching the pier he is obliged to walk in a queue through a turnstile, where he pays 50 cents for the privilege of entering the colony, just as though he was going into the Zoo. It is a mean, shabby welcome to the beautiful island of Ceylon, but everything is contemptible at Colombo that comes under the control of the harbour authorities. Naturally, the staff in the custom-office is lazy, incapable and insufficient.

At the time of my visit, in March, 1926, Ceylon was

well content with its Governor. A few months previously Sir Hugh Clifford had been transferred from West Africa, where he had been Governor of the Gold Coast, and afterwards Governor of Nigeria for many years, covering the whole period of the war. He had known Ceylon before, having served as Colonial Secretary from 1907-1912 upon his return from a similar post in the West Indies. The experience of these high offices, however, was not his most essential qualification for the blue ribbon of the Colonial Service. The suitability of his appointment as Governor of Ceylon was due to the fact that of all the British rulers in Asia he was best able to judge how far native aspirations could be gratified with propriety. The many years of his official life that had been spent amongst the jungles of Malaya had given him an insight into the native mind that was almost uncanny. Thus, he was acceptable to both sections of the community. The natives knew that he was a sympathetic friend. His own countrymen were aware that he would be a wise and cautious ruler.

Sir Hugh Clifford is fortunate in his helpmate. Lady Clifford is a clever and highly-educated woman with the tact and charm that are essential to a Governor's wife. Some years ago, when Mrs. Henry de la Pasteur, she won fame as a novelist and a play-writer, being especially skilful in portraying the characters of children; but since her second marriage her pen has had to be idle.<sup>1</sup> The duties of official life have compelled her, as they compelled Fanny Burney, to abandon her career temporarily; but when leisure comes to her once more it is to be hoped that she will resume her craft. Meanwhile, no doubt, the imagination which conceived her stories will assist her to solve the innumerable problems requiring the decision of a Vicereine.

The residence of the Governor in Colombo, known as Queen's House, suffers by comparison with Government

<sup>1</sup> Lady Clifford's talent has been inherited by her daughter, the well-known novelist, who writes under the nom de plume of E. M. Delafield.

House at Singapore. Instead of a lofty position in the midst of an extensive park it occupies a disagreeable site in the business quarter of the town, hemmed in by buildings and protected only by a mere strip of garden. The mansion, too, has none of the airy spaciousness of the mansion at Singapore, and is uncomfortable as a home and not even convenient for big receptions. A new Government House should be built in one of the residential suburbs beyond the Cinnamon Gardens, so that the Governor of Ceylon shall have as pleasant a home as any other member of the English colony.

The King's Pavilion at Kandy, the second in importance of the official residences, is a more agreeable place in every respect. It is an imposing building of graceful design, with snow-white walls and high French windows; but, although the reception-rooms are as spacious as needs be, the architect has failed to provide an adequate number of bedrooms. In consequence little bungalows have been built in the grounds for the accommodation of guests when there is a house party. The glorious gardens extend for many acres along the base of the hanging woods that surround the lake, a tropical paradise with shady walks and broad sloping lawns, abounding in all kinds of exquisite trees. One huge banyan near the sentry-gate beside the main drive seems to be as large as some of those in Java. It is the haunt of a host of flying foxes, which hang from the branches like fruit while they sleep during the day; but at dawn and sunset they circle to and fro high above the trees like a flock of rooks, filling the air with their shrill cries.

The other residence of the Governor of Ceylon, which is called Queen's Cottage, is situated at Nuwara Eliya, the principal hill-station over six thousand feet above the sea. It is merely a large villa, but it has a pleasant home-like appearance, especially when the smoke is ascending from its chimneys on a cold morning. Queen's Cottage has been the favourite resort of many previous Governors, on account of its bracing air and because it is close to a



first-class golf-course ; but Sir Hugh and Lady Clifford seem to prefer the King's Pavilion at Kandy, since it is the most convenient centre for their work, and being fond of hospitality they find that Kandy is a more suitable place for entertaining their friends.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, or "the Lossie Loon," as he has called himself, arrived at Colombo in the *Maloya* shortly before my visit, travelling with a considerable entourage. During the voyage his fellow-passengers paid him the gratuitous compliment of electing him Chairman of the Sports Committee ; for they believed that his position in the world called for such an honour, forgetting that he became Premier through the accident of an accident and *oblivious of his war-record*. Very soon the fellow-passengers regretted what they had done. For, instead of the genial milk-of-human-kindness, all-things-to-all-men celebrity, whom they expected to make their comrade, "the Lossie Loon" showed himself to be an aloof and inaccessible individual. So, with swift change of humour, the fellow-passengers began to tell one another that he was a very bad chairman and made ridicule of his Scottish accent.

Still, it was a chastened Mr. Ramsay Macdonald<sup>1</sup> that travelled to Ceylon in 1926, more discreet from necessity than the politician who had visited the East sixteen years before and wrote *The Awakening of India*. It was impossible for a prospective guest at Government House to hob-nob with native extremists, like Natesa Aiyer. A man who hoped to be Prime Minister again could not give encouragement to native revolutionaries. Consequently, when he arrived in Colombo he frowned sternly upon the dusky mobs that besieged his hotel, and made it known that he could not discuss politics because he was on a holiday. The most complimentary thing that he could find to say about the people of Ceylon was that they are "dreamy."

<sup>1</sup> This is the name by which Mr. Macdonald has always been known ; but since his apotheosis, the journalists have insisted upon spelling it with a big D.

For a Labour leader Mr. Macdonald is comparatively a poor man, but many of his party are rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Of late, the wealthy socialist has been the subject of much controversy. An effort has been made to prove that it is consistent, both with morals and logic, for a rich man to remain a member of the socialist party. Yet, surely such an attitude is indefensible. According to the jargon of Karl Marx the "wage slavery" of the many and the appropriation of "economic rent" by the few has created a condition of society that is immoral and unjust. It cannot be right for a man to profit by an evil of which he is aware.

It is impossible for the socialist plutocrat to justify his existence except on the principle that more good will come by perpetuating the particular evil than by putting an end to it. But that this can be done has never been demonstrated logically. There is no paramount necessity for an individual to retain his riches in order to propagate the gospel of socialism. It would be more profitable for his cause to hand over his capital to "Labour," and he would make as efficient a propagandist if he were a poor man. There would be no fear that he would succumb to the persecution of his enemies if his party granted him a small annuity. His action in repudiating his wealth would be a splendid example, an abnormal instance of the application of his principles to everyday life. Such altruism, however, does not appeal to the rich socialist. For he must have motor-cars and expensive wines, even though these are provided by "wage slavery."

The rich socialist is living in a state of sin, fully conscious of his wickedness. To seek a parallel we must imagine a priest in holy orders who is aware that he is drawing an income from the white slave traffic. Both are profiting from what they regard as an immoral trade, knowingly and with their eyes open. Each is in duty bound, if he is consistent with his principles, to reject the tainted money. It is just as iniquitous for the sincere

socialist to live upon the proceeds of "wage slavery" as it would be for a clergyman of the Church of England to receive "economic rent" from a *maison de tolérance* in Paris. In other words the socialist-plutocrat is a contradiction in terms as well as a moral imposture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is no essential difference between the dogmas of the communist and the socialist. A communist is merely a socialist with the courage of his convictions.

## CHAPTER XXVI

"WHERE EVERY PROSPECT PLEASES . . ."

HAVING accepted an invitation at Kandy I remained in Colombo only for one night, proceeding up-country next day by the afternoon train. It is one of the most beautiful railway journeys in the world, displaying scenes of rich and abundant luxuriance that are unrivalled even in Java. Whether the train is traversing the lowlands, where the greenest rice-fields in the world shimmer in the bright sunshine, or is climbing among the mountains, revealing views of high peaks and deep valleys choked by tropical verdure, the incomparable panorama is exquisite from first to last. One can see the country better by rail than by road.

It was twenty-five years since my last visit when Kandy was a peaceful rock-garden with a temple and a small native village, but the place has become a bustling tourist centre, adjoining a considerable town. Though not yet spoilt, for the water and the hanging woods and some of the quaint buildings still remain, all the old tranquillity is gone. The quiet country lane, which formerly skirted the little town from the railway station to the head of the lake, has been transformed into a busy street, lined with shops, and contains two large new stores belonging to the Miller and Cargill companies. The comfortable hotel near the station, where I stayed in 1901, is now the post office and the wild, straggling garden that extended along the roadside, in which the exiled Arabi Pasha used to sit and meditate, has been built over entirely. Certainly, Kandy has moved with the times.

Although stone curbs, iron railings and tar-macadam

roads have helped to emphasize the artificial appearance of the little lake, the scene as a whole remains as enchanting as ever. An amphitheatre of wooded hills encloses the shore on three sides, a close circle of steep greenery, and from its slopes the white walls of bungalows peep forth here and there amidst the foliage. Graceful rain-trees covered with pink blooms fringe the drive that surrounds the lake, interspersed with other strange flowering trees ablaze with scarlet and yellow flowers, while hedges of hibiscus and pointsettias line the roadside. Pathways everywhere wind up amongst the hanging woods, whence pretty glimpses can be seen of the sparkling water below, and it is possible to drive round the circle of hills along Lady Horton's road and the Upper Lake road. Here, two thousand feet above sea-level, the air feels fresh and cool in contrast to the shut-in valley. In the sunlit glades clouds of most beautiful butterflies abound and in the early morning the branches are alive with chattering monkeys. Formerly, after dark, clouds of fireflies used to play around the shores of the lake, but the glare of motor-lamps has driven most of them up into the woodlands.

"We can't compete with this sort of thing," we may imagine the poor little fellows saying to themselves.

The Dalada Maligawa, or Temple of the Tooth—Kandy's most famous possession—stands in a picturesque corner of the lake in the quarter that contains the oldest existing buildings. A description of any length is unnecessary, for it has been the subject of many volumes; and, since the tooth is not on view except to privileged visitors, the place has little more of interest to show than the ordinary Buddhist temple. The shrine itself is beautiful, a small and ornate chamber, built six hundred years ago. Its exterior walls are filigreed and painted, and the great wooden doors are gilded and carved and adorned with richly-wrought gold and copper handles. It is impossible to withhold reverence from the crowds of devout worshippers or to deny the spiritual value of

their religion. Yet, one carries away few impressions from the precincts of the Dalada Maligawa except the memory of ignorant guides and importunate beggars, the scent of votive flowers and shoals of turtles swimming in the moat.

In one of the outer cloisters there are some curious paintings on the walls, depicting the punishments that await the wrong-doer in the next world. Hen-pecking wives are tormented appropriately by birds with great beaks, while children who have disobeyed their parents suffer an equally painful retribution. The most satisfactory punishment, however, is that meted out to the unjust tax-gatherer, who is impaled with spears by black devils and roasted in a fiery furnace.

Within the buildings of the Temple, leading out of one of the courtyards, there is an Oriental Library, where copies of the Buddhist Bible, five hundred years old, can be seen by the visitor. The pages of these volumes have been made of dried palm-leaves and the letters written with the point of a stilus. Some of the bindings are magnificent with sides of chased silver, studded with jewels. The priest in charge, dressed in yellow robes like all Buddhist priests, appears to take an intelligent interest in the books.

Other old buildings near the Temple of the Tooth are worthy of a visit. Opposite is the Nata Dewala, or Lower Temple, which has a curious archway and contains a Buddha in repose. The King's Audience Room hard by, now used as the High Court of Justice, is ornamented with beautifully carved woodwork, executed by a Kandyan artist a hundred and fifty years ago. In the Art Museum, adjoining the Kacheri or Government Buildings, specimens of Ceylonese art may be purchased, fashioned by clever craftsmen. The old King's Palace, close to the Museum, is the home of the Government Agent, and no one is admitted without special permission. It is remarkable for the large blue and white bas-reliefs that adorn the walls, a sort of Brobdingnagian Wedgwood, and

for its lovely little tropical garden. From the front windows of the palace the last king of Kandy, a cruel despot of a hundred years ago, watched the decapitation of two of his children. Near the scene of this tragedy stands St. Paul's Church, where I was present at Queen Victoria's memorial service in January, 1901. The entrance gates of the King's Pavilion, the residence of the Governor, are situated a little farther down the road.

Kandy, like Colombo, has become a den of thieves. The tourists, who arrive in flocks from the ships, stay only for a few hours, so the people of the place have little time in which to do their pocket-picking. A feverish desire for swift plunder inspires a large proportion of the population. Rows of black palms are thrust forth solicitously on the slightest provocation; the eyes of beasts of prey follow every movement of their victims. Touts and mendicants swarm as thickly as they did in parts of Italy in the bad old days before Mussolini preached the gospel of hard work. Ramsay Macdonald's "dreamy" natives are wide enough awake when there is a chance of thievery. For some reason the inhabitants expect to extort a percentage upon all current prices. Hotels demand a few rupees more than those in Colombo, and even the bank rate is less generous. The most honest men in the town are the rickshaw men, who have to work hardest for a living.

The attractiveness of the Ceylonese crowds is due for the most part to their bright-coloured garments. When a procession of natives passes along the street there is a display of all the colours of the rainbow. No such kaleidoscopic spectacle can be seen even in Java. And the graceful carriage of the people is remarkable. Women walk erect and bareheaded, wearing a white full-bosomed bodice and a gaudy skirt, or, in the case of the Tamils, one vivid piece of drapery, gathered in at the waist and flung loosely over the shoulder. Both sexes have a curious habit. They never go abroad without an umbrella.

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At every step one encounters diverse specimens of humanity. The grave old gentleman in white, with a long white beard and turban, is a Moorman, and, no doubt a prosperous tradesman. A person with a heavy black moustache, who wears a fez, a cloth jacket, and a variegated sârong, is a younger member of the same tribe. The stalwart fellow, bare to the waist with a tight white skirt wound around him, who strides along with a heavy box balanced on the top of his head and a long pugaree flowing down his back, is one of the lower class Tamils. The identity of another individual in a white jacket and a green stole around his neck is not so easy to determine. Many of the men wear nothing but a coloured sârong, tucked into a bunch at the middle.

During my former visit to Kandy I had driven down to the Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya almost every day. The road is changed little, although the red-tiled roof has superseded the palm-thatch as the fashionable covering of native dwellings and the interiors are furnished more lavishly. One sees the same swarms of coolies, the women resplendent in green and yellow and scarlet draperies, the men half-naked in a white skirt or scarlet loin cloth. Scores of children are playing in the dust in front of their houses.

The Peradeniya Gardens are unchanged and seemed more lovely than ever. With the park-like grace of the gardens at Saigon they rival the gardens at Singapore in the display of flowers. Their situation is more beautiful than at Buitenzorg and the river that encircles them, instead of being vandalized by a rude stone embankment, remains a natural stream. Though there may be a more complete collection of tropical plants in Java, far greater taste and imagination is shown in the arrangement and setting-out of the grounds at Peradeniya.

Not far from the entrance to the Botanical Gardens there is a shallow spot in the Mahaweli Ganga river, where the tame working elephants are brought in the evening to



bathe. The creatures revel in their bath, pouring the water over their backs with their trunks or lying in the bed of the stream with their heads only visible above the surface, being persuaded with difficulty to return to the bank at the proper time. Crowds of spectators come to watch the spectacle. In the old days no one dreamt of asking them for a penny, but since the spirit of importunity has been awakened, the natives seek to make the washing of their beasts into a profitable show. Any one who stands in the road to watch is sure to have a row of black palms thrust beneath his chin. It is difficult to see much of the river now, for the banks are shrouded in jungle and, at the only point of vantage, a sort of grandstand blocks the view. Naturally a place in this stand has to be purchased at a price.

When last in Ceylon I had spent some days in the mountains at Hatton, the centre of an important tea-growing district, and had stayed for a week at Nuwara Eliya during the month of January. Unpleasant recollections of this hill-station lingered in my mind, memories of heavy rainstorms and thick Scottish mists; and so, in spite of being told that the weather is more genial in March and that an hotel de luxe had been opened, I decided not to visit the place again. Anuradhapura, which I had never seen, seemed to have a greater attraction and is within easy distance of Kandy. The distance is ninety miles and the charge for the journey by car is £7, a moderate enough price, but compared unfavourably with the cost of the seventy miles' drive from Kamunting to Ipoh in Malaya, which was only twenty dollars, or fifty shillings in English money.

It was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon that I set out from Kandy. For the first twenty miles, as far as the busy little town of Matale, a wall of tropical foliage borders the road on either side, but through an occasional break amidst the trees there are visions of winding streams rushing through the jungle. Sometimes one passes a native village or a tea or rubber plantation. In one place we saw a

group of women stone-breakers, working in a small quarry close to the highway. A Ceylonese servant, named Francis, whom I had engaged in Colombo, was travelling with me, an amiable and obliging person, and useful as an interpreter.

In less than two hours we had reached Dambulla, where there are some famous rock temples, more than half-way on our journey. Since there was plenty of time to spare, Francis insisted that we should climb the long steep ascent—600 feet high—over burning rocks in the blazing sunshine. When we arrived at the summit the view was magnificent, extending for scores of miles over the jungle, with the square-topped rock of Sigiriya in the middle distance and a chain of tall blue mountains outlined against the horizon. There are five temples on the hill of Dambulla, occupying caves in the side of a cliff, but the third and the first are the most curious. Number 1 contains a recumbent Buddha, nearly fifty feet long; number 3 is celebrated for its broad sloping ceiling, covered with paintings of episodes in Buddhist mythology. Each rock temple is in charge of a verger-priest, who expects a fee for unlocking the door, and a rupee does not seem to content him. It is strange that the images of the prophet of such a beautiful religion are not more true to life and artistic. Nothing more unreal and ridiculous can be imagined than the conventional effigy of Buddha, with his inane smirk and his coating of crude yellow paint, touched up with streaks of blue and scarlet. The recumbent Buddha always looks particularly foolish.

After tea at an excellent rest-house we set out again. Presently, the rain began to fall, increasing soon to a tropical deluge that accompanied us for the last forty miles of our journey. The road in places was six inches deep in water, and the wheels of the car tossed great waves on either side as though we were rushing through a brook. It was difficult to drive through the blinding downpour while daylight lasted, but when darkness came the chauffeur had

to slow down to a crawling pace and peer around the edge of the screen incessantly. Processions of ill-lit ox-waggons helped to hinder our progress. A storm of thunder and lightning raged for a couple of hours, but the continual flashes were of use to guide us on our way, being especially welcome when the car was skirting the banks of a lake or river. During the greater part of the journey the road traversed the heart of jungle, where there was black darkness. It was a relief to see the lights of the Anuradhapura Hotel, where we arrived shortly before 8 o'clock, after an unpleasant and somewhat dangerous experience. The efficient chauffeur, who had steered us with such care and skill, deserved his extra tip and appeared well content with it.

The Anuradhapura Hotel—formerly a government rest-house and now a private enterprise—is a commodious building; and when electric light is installed in place of odoriferous oil-lamps, it will be adequate in every respect. The sum of twelve rupees, or eighteen shillings a day *en pension*, will procure a bedroom, dressing-room, bathroom and veranda, so the hotel has the merit of cheapness. It stands in the midst of extensive grounds, filled with plantations of handsome trees, where hosts of fireflies flicker at night and troops of wild monkeys gambol in the early morning. At present, the place has no serious competitor; but its only rival, a shanty kept by a native, called the Central Hotel, makes a brave effort to attract custom with an immense signboard, bearing the inscription—“Dewar's White Label.” Three days, at least, should be spent at Anuradhapura in order to visit the principal objects of interest in the neighbourhood.

The modern town, or village, is a small one, and the ruins are scattered over a wide area, mostly forest land, where the trees have been planted far apart, allowing the sunshine to penetrate everywhere. The most remarkable objects that have survived are the dagabas, or tombs containing a relic of Buddha, huge monuments of brick-work, rivalling in size the pyramids of Egypt. In their

original state these great piles were shaped in the form of an inverted bell, resembling the cupolas at Borobudur, and were sheathed with cement all over. In the distance the gleaming white domes with their gilded pinnacles must have presented a remarkable spectacle. Six of these dagabas still exist, and the largest of them was originally 400 feet high or nearly as tall as the Great Pyramid. All have suffered from erosion and decay and are overgrown with a thick tangle of jungle.

Apart from the dagabas the ruins of Anuradhapura will disappoint those who are familiar with the Hindu monuments of Java, for, except to the archæologist, most of them will be meaningless stones, venerable merely for their antiquity. No bas-reliefs recount the history of the times or exemplify the religion of the people. No complete building, nor anything that suggests a complete building, now remains; all the great temples have been reduced to rugged heaps of chaotic masonry. A little row of pillars, a carved slab at the foot of two or three steps, known as a moonstone, a stone tank about the size of a small swimming-bath, these are the most common objects that meet the eye. Still, it is evident that the city was as immense as it is described in the records, for the ruins are innumerable and cover a vast expanse. Of the ancient buildings there are more vestiges of the Brazen Palace than any other, and these consist of "a forest of stone pillars," sixteen hundred in all, looking like headstones in a graveyard. According to tradition the structure was built two thousand years ago, being nine storeys high originally with a thousand separate rooms. It is difficult to believe that it was so colossal, for the pillars are slender and would not support a great weight.

Although the ruins may not be enthralling they are placed in delightful surroundings, and in the early morning or an hour before sunset, when the heat of the sun is not overpowering, it is delightful to drive along the smooth roads that wind amidst the trees, proceeding from one dagaba to another and halting at the various heaps of

stones that mark the site of a monastery or the palace of a king. In the morning there is plenty of life in the forest. Monkeys and squirrels and great lizards abound, and a large blue bird and a small one with bright green plumage may be seen occasionally. One's pleasure, however, is apt to be spoilt by the incompetent guide who is a necessary encumbrance. The young man who inflicted himself upon me spoke little English and could tell me nothing about the ruins or the locality except in a few parrot phrases. A simple question baffled him. Yet he had gained a government certificate as the result of an examination and he charged five rupees a day.

Undoubtedly, the Isurumuni Vahara, a rock-temple constructed about 300 B.C. is the beauty spot of Anuradhapura. It is built on the top of several high boulders, encircled by shrubs and coco-nut palms with a little lake beneath. Although a picturesque old building, the trees, the rocks and the water give it most of its charm. The image of Buddha within is reputed to be two thousand years old. However great one's respect for the Buddhist religion may be, a succession of visits to Buddhist temples soon becomes wearisome. One grows tired of conventional Buddhas, lying at full length or sitting cross-legged on a cushion, lacquered all over with bright yellow paint. A sickly atmosphere prevails owing to votive flowers and burning incense. No one can complain that the priests are true to their calling and expect alms. They do the same sort of thing all the world over. But the lazy loafers, who infest the threshold of every temple and try to extort backsheesh by offering dead leaves or withered flowers, ought to be suppressed rigorously. Their importunities irritate visitors and deter them from giving donations to the priests.

Not far from the Isurumuni rock-temple are two huge sheets of water that appear to be natural lakes. The shores of both are surrounded almost entirely by woodland, most of which is dense jungle. One is called the

Nuwara tank and the other the Tissa tank, and they are artificial reservoirs constructed two thousand years ago, part of a splendid system of irrigation. Nuwara tank is sixteen miles in circumference and Tissa tank is six miles, and there are many others in this part of Ceylon equally gigantic. All of them swarm with fish and abound in crocodiles. The labour of building these enormous water-works must have been even more formidable than the work of erecting the dagabas.

The famous tree-clad hill of Mihintale, which has a dagaba and a temple near its summit, is one of the most pleasant excursions in the neighbourhood of Anuradhapura. It lies about ten miles away in the midst of the forest, and an early start is necessary, for the task of climbing the many hundreds of steps to reach the top should not be undertaken in the full heat of day. The ascent is laborious, steeper and higher than the approach to Dambulla, but a most magnificent view is an ample reward for the fatigue. A level plain extends on all sides as far as the eye can discern, buried everywhere in jungle and unbroken scarcely by a hill, an even wilder expanse of tropical luxuriance than in the country around the ruins of Angkor. Near the temple upon the rock there is a brazen statue of Mahinda, the son of King Anula, who was the first Buddhist missionary from India twenty-two centuries ago. Many shady pathways wind around the hill through the trees, leading to ancient shrines and sacred pools of water.

Modern Anuradhapura is an up-to-date little town with a Catholic and an Anglican church and a large gaol that seems to be well populated. There is an experimental farm, maintained by the government, for the study of tropical agriculture, where plants from foreign countries are acclimatized successfully. Limes from British Guiana and pine-apples from South Africa grow in abundance, and even oranges, lemons and grape-fruit seem to thrive beneath the fierce sunshine. Fields of hemp plants, looking like giant artichokes, from which the farm

derives a considerable revenue, adjoins the plantations of fruit trees. The hemp leaves are crushed in a machine until nothing remains but the fibre, which is washed by hand and hung on lines to dry. The raw material goes to the English and American markets.

One of my fellow-guests at the Anuradhapura Hotel was a robust swarthy young man who had the assured air of the English public-school boy slightly exaggerated. In due course he told me that he was the medical officer in charge of the Anti-malarial department; and, assuming from my conversation that I took him for an Englishman—which did not seem to displease him—he went on to inform me that he was a Burgher. When I praised the Burgher doctor and the Burgher lawyer, whom I had met during my previous visit, he was highly gratified. The Burghers are an admirable class, clever, industrious and loyal to the Crown, and show that the union of European and Ceylonese can produce capable offspring. The old Dutch settlers from whom they have sprung left a worthy progeny behind them. Among their descendants of to-day are some of the most successful professional men in the island. My young acquaintance seemed to be a zealous official and was looking forward with eagerness to the forthcoming visit of the Governor, whose attention he hoped to be lucky enough to attract. He told me that the native workers in the Anti-malarial department are paid 80 cents a day and seek the work because it is easy, although they would earn a rupee a day in the fields.

It is a tedious journey by train to Colombo from Anuradhapura, taking seven and a half hours, although the distance is only 126 miles and the train runs through flat country nearly all the way. No restaurant car is provided, the meals being served in a tier of plates bound up in a napkin. There were innumerable stoppages, and the train came to pieces more than once owing to the coaches becoming detached from the engine through defective couplings. It is a government enterprise, of course,

for government railways are inefficient all the world over. No wonder that there is an agitation to compel the C.G.R. to hand over its system to a private company. Certainly, the people of Ceylon possess at present the world's worst railway.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### COLOMBO

**C**OLOMBO is a city of shopkeepers. The selling of something across the counter is obviously the chief industry. No very large shop was in existence twenty-five years ago, but now there are at least eight European stores with palatial premises. Several great liners enter the port every day, and the retail trade subsists to a large extent upon the tourist traffic.

This battenning upon the traveller, which is non-existent in Java, Malaya and Indo-China, has an evil effect upon the native population, the whole of whom makes a practice of fleecing the visitor. Every one who has paid his pennies to enter the island and passes through the turnstile will be the victim of Ceylonese rapacity immediately he steps into the street. Before he can drive away in a car four people have to be appeased with a gift, namely, the owner or lessee of the car, the runner who calls it up, the chauffeur who drives it, and a scoundrel who leaps on at the last moment and says that he is a guide. To suppress these pests effectively the police force would have to be doubled, and unfortunately it is forbidden to take the law into one's own hands. A sturdy resident did so during my visit, caning one of the motor-car bandits severely. Instead of being rewarded by a public banquet this meritorious citizen was punished by a fine and imprisonment.

If the visitor walks through the street his steps are dogged by hosts of importunate black men, who attempt to extort largesse from him on some pretext or another.

Long residence in the city does not bring immunity, for the islander regards every European as his rightful prey. When dealing in a native shop the utmost caution is necessary, for the salesman has no scruple in proffering a spurious article. A good bargain in precious stones is almost impossible, but cheap tortoiseshell may be purchased occasionally. The shell, however, is thinner than that sold at Naples, and fakes are numerous.

The great stores of Colombo are as well stocked and sumptuous as those of any Asiatic town, and Cargill's has gained the sobriquet of "the Harrods' of the East." But Miller's, Whiteway Laidlaw's and the Colombo Stores seem to be little inferior. Owing to high tariffs everything is expensive, the rupee, which is worth one and sixpence, having the value of a shilling. Nevertheless, protection has not helped to retard the prosperity of the shops, the bulk of their trade being done with the travelling public. It is an easy matter to pass on the amount of the duty to these customers.

No hotel in the world is more beautifully situated than the Galle Face Hotel. Its lawns border the sea and a wide expanse of grass-land, a mile in length, sweeps from its main façade along the esplanade by the shore as far as the city. The dark-red building is a handsome pile and the halls and reception-rooms, with their spacious corridors and shady piazzas, are cool and well ventilated. But the man who designed the place cannot have understood that architecture in the tropics ought not to follow the same plan as at home, for the windows of the bedrooms are small and none of them have sun-blinds or shutters. Another imperfection characterizes them all. In the Europe Hotel at Singapore each bedroom has its own telephone. In the Galle Face Hotel at Colombo an instrument placed in the corridor has to suffice, so every one in the neighbourhood is disturbed when some one else is carrying on a conversation. This publicity, however, seems to be popular with the residents, for it is the custom to bawl messages in the telephone box in the public lounge with the door wide open.

The Ceylonese "boys," who wait at table, are always objects of interest to the newcomer, for they wear the curious tortoiseshell comb in their hair, a custom of the men in the Low-country. They are docile and competent in the dining-hall and lounge, being under the eye of the management, but as bedroom servants they are slow, lazy and undisciplined. The head waiter is a venerable gentleman with a coal-black face and a sparse grey beard. In his white drill mess-jacket, faced with green cloth lapels, his green waistcoat and starched shirt, with a drill petticoat wound around him, he looks a most impressive figure. His hair is arranged in a chignon, crowned by the inevitable comb. But one ceases to regard him with approval when he produces his wine list, where the prices are outrageous. Ordinary Medoc and ordinary Graves cost six rupees a bottle, and six rupees is equal to nine shillings.

During the month of March the Galle Face Hotel is not a comfortable place of residence. Every day a ship-load of passengers is disgorged by some great liner and the rooms become as crowded as a native bazaar. To read or write is a tribulation owing to the pandemonium, while it is often impossible to find a chair. During the whole of the morning the tables in the lounge are occupied by voracious people, gorging a strange ante-luncheon meal of tea and buns. And in the evening the terrace in front of the dining-room, where it is usual to take coffee after dinner, is thronged by steerage passengers, consuming bottled beer and sandwiches. It would be churlish to begrudge such recreation to the good fellows in the steerage, but an hotel that allows this sort of thing should not call itself first-class or charge first-class prices. Moreover, there is a spacious bar-parlour in another part of the premises, where refreshment of this kind could be provided. Of all the ships that come into port the Bibby liners are most to be feared, since they stop for two days.

Colombo is not such a vivacious city as Singapore. Its theatre functions less frequently and the hotel life is not nearly so gay. Instead of a ball every night and a *thé*

*dansant* on three afternoons of the week, there is only one dance on Saturday evening, which takes place at the Galle Face Hotel. An atmosphere of dullness and melancholy pervades the place and the people appear to be lacking in energy. It is strange that this should be so, for the island is prosperous and there is no lack of money.

The Galle Face Hotel possesses a splendid ballroom, but its dances are not the smart functions that are to be seen at Raffles or the Europe. They are frequented by youths who move awkwardly in their dress-suits and the clothes of the women are not as chic and tasteful as those of the women of Singapore. The *Café au lait* element is much in evidence and when this is so the best English people are never numerous. Except on special occasions the soldiers and the civil service do not seem to be in the habit of attending the Saturday night ball. There is no snobbery in such an attitude. The social recognition of the native and the half-caste must involve acquiescence in intermarriage as a logical consequence; and at present every Englishman and Englishwoman who has lived in Asia will shudder at such a suggestion.

Both in Kandy and Colombo the planters are accustomed to come into the best hotels in the short wide knickerbockers which they wear on the plantations. They sit at the tea-table with these garments rucked half-way up their thighs, having no scruple in thrusting their nakedness beneath the noses of their women friends. In the case of ordinary mortals this display might be inoffensive, but in the cases to which I refer the circumstances are exceptional. For it may be affirmed without fear of dispute—at the risk of offending the Scottish gillie—that of all the hairy knees in the world the most hairy belong to the Ceylon planter. This *gaucherie* would not be permitted in Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, where the Englishman always dresses decently when he comes into town. It should not be tolerated in Colombo.

It is delightful to sit on the lawn overlooking the beach at the Galle Face Hotel and watch the setting sun as it

sinks into the sea beyond the horizon. Darkness comes suddenly, not "at a single stride," but treading on the heels of twilight more swiftly than in the West. Presently, the moon rises above the waves, crimson at first, but becoming a gleaming silver globe before it has mounted above the bowed and twisted palm grove that fringes the sands. The air no longer seems to flow from the mouth of a furnace, but sweeps with delicious coolness along the shore. Unhappily, this period of the day is spoilt repeatedly by torrents of rain that begin soon after sundown and often continue for several hours.

The crows of Galle Face always amuse the visitor. It is probable that he will be aroused in the morning by one of these elfish birds, which sits on his window-ledge and caws; or, as often as not, hops into the room and makes off with part of his *chota basari*. A colony of them live on the premises, and all day long they circle around the lawns and sit in the palm trees, ever alert for food; or congregate on the roof tops, capering, quarrelling and confabulating, keeping up a perpetual clamour. Shocking stories are told of their capacity for theft, and ladies are warned not to leave their jewellery lying upon the dressing-table. It is easy to imagine that the souls of defunct Ceylonese merchants have taken up their abode in the bodies of these imps of mischief, so typical are they of the besetting vice of the islanders.

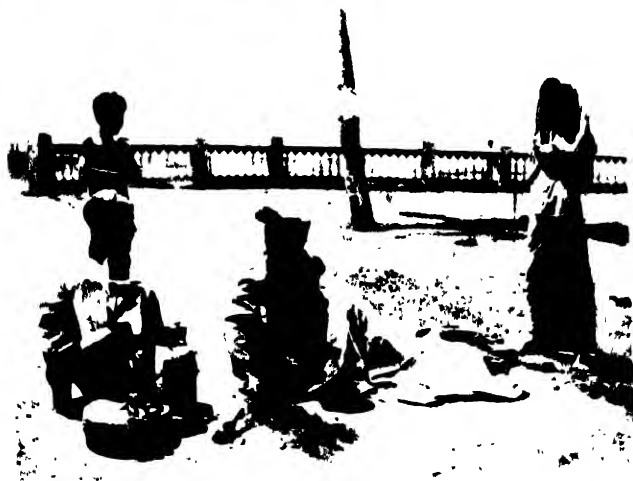
The native juggler is another of the usual side-shows of the hotel, and his dexterity is remarkable. In his most famous performance—the Mango-tree Trick—the seed becomes a small shoot, and the shoot develops into a shrub in the course of a few moments, the metamorphosis taking place beneath a piece of sacking under which the juggler conceals the plant while it is supposed to be growing. The trick, of course, is mere sleight of hand, one plant being substituted for another. But another of his exhibitions of conjuring was far more inexplicable. Placing a couple of bricks upon the ground he rested the half of an empty coco-nut shell upon them and filled it with

water. Then he produced a piece of wood about the size of a man's thumb, and, having inserted a bent match at one end and an unbroken match at the other, he declared that it was his little pet duck, which would do whatever he told it. Setting it afloat in the coco-nut cup, he stood about four feet away and commanded it to swim, whereupon it moved slowly around the edge, stopping whenever he bade it. When he ordered it to dive it plunged beneath the water, bobbing up immediately. It remained at the bottom for half a minute when he gave the word and went through all sorts of gyrations. The only mechanism was the piece of wood and the cup of water. No thread was visible, although the trick was performed in full daylight, and it was difficult to imagine how magnetism could have been employed. Perhaps Mr. Maskelyne can explain the mystery.

The "dreamy" Ceylonese, as Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has dubbed him, is not by any means the docile, tranquil creature that he appears. Quite as prone to angry passions as the rest of the human race he has not learnt self-control like the Malay, and running amok is not uncommon. On the slightest provocation the native whips out his knife and stabs the man who has offended him. Murders are numerous since justice is not administered as inflexibly as it should be. During my visit a boy, caught in the act of stealing coco-nuts, stabbed and killed the peon who tried to capture him. The Chief Justice sentenced the young scoundrel to eight strokes *with a light cane*, to be followed by two years' detention in a reformatory. Thus, murderers are multiplied.

There is a growing demand amongst the natives for wide extension of self-government, and the unrest fomented by Ceylonese agitators and newspapers such as the *Ceylon Independent*.<sup>1</sup> The Legislative Assembly where a great deal of foolish talk takes place, has its Tam and Ceylonese representatives. The last bright ide

<sup>1</sup> The better-class newspapers are the *Times of Ceylon*, the *Ceylon Observer* and the *Ceylon Daily News*, all well printed and well edited.



JUGGER IN CEYLON - THE MANGO TREE TRIOT





promulgated by the extremists is that Ceylon shall cease to be a British colony and shall be placed under the control of the League of Nations. Presumably, the British Navy will continue to have the privilege of protecting the island.

Race-meetings in Ceylon are unworthy of comparison with those in Malaya. The one great sport is cricket, and nowhere in the world, outside England, has the game reached a higher excellence, except in Australia. It is in the blood of the people. Wherever a piece of level ground exists, in the middle of a plantation of palm trees or upon the pathway besides a road, a group of native children is always to be seen, busy with bat and ball. Naturally, many of these youthful enthusiasts become "first class" cricketers when they grow up, and in the annual match between Europeans and Ceylonese the black men usually are victorious. The Europeans have not won since 1903.

In the match at which I was present, in March 1926, the Englishman had the best of a drawn game. owing to the wonderful bowling of W. T. Greswell, the Somerset amateur, who, in the first innings, took seven wickets for twenty-seven runs. The game was played on the ground of the Colombo Cricket Club, which is as level as a billiard-table with a patch of the most vivid green in the centre where the pitch is kept watered. The field is surrounded by light enclosures, which have a bamboo framework with a palm-leaf thatch, and, when the match is worth watching, they are crammed with enthusiastic natives, who follow every incident in the game and applaud intelligently. The crowd laughs and cheers and seems very good-tempered. It will be better for their happiness if they do not trouble their heads about self-government and stick to cricket.

When the Australian cricket team arrived in Colombo on board the *Otranto* on the 24th of March, *en route* for England, an all-Ceylon eleven captained by Major F. R. Brooke, played a match against them on the C.C.C. ground,

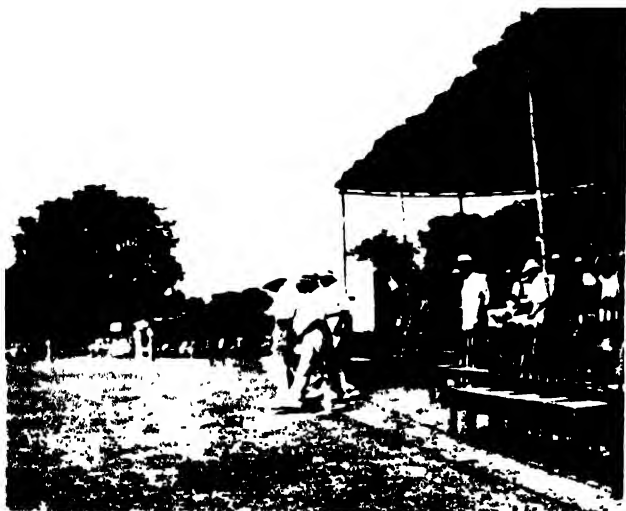
and were beaten by only a few runs.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing wrong with Ceylon cricket.

In the towns and their suburbs the chocolate-coloured roads, which once were a beautiful feature of the island, have been replaced by tar-macadam. Such is the state of the road from Colombo to Mount Lavinia, which used to be a tranquil country lane, but is now bordered with villas on either side. Happily, the palm groves that fringe the coast are in existence still, but Mount Lavinia itself has been vulgarized beyond recognition. Wings and annexes have disfigured the hotel, previously a handsome building erected by a former Governor, while the little green hill upon which it stands, overlooking the sea, has been carved into formal terraces, flanked by stone balustrades and brutal iron railings. Below, in the sandy cove shaded by coco-nut trees—once a lovely bit of tropical scenery with rows of catamarans strewn upon the beach and the huts of the fisherfolk dotted along the shore—a huge bathing-pavilion of the Coney Island type rears its hideous walls high above the sands. Mount Lavinia has been dedicated to the tripper.

Another charming place in the neighbourhood of Colombo appears to have deteriorated. The reach of the Kelani river when first I saw it from the rest-house at Kaduwella, seemed the most lovely tropical river-scene that I had ever beheld. At this point there is a sharp bend in the stream, which, according to my memory, used to flow far beneath between high banks, enclosed by dense jungle on both sides, the tall trees drooping far across the water. Now, the vegetation is comparatively sparse, owing to the devastations of the wood-cutter, and the level of the river was higher, because perhaps of the recent rains. Possibly, I may have looked upon the view with the eyes of a *laudator temporis acti*, but certainly it seemed to have become commonplace.

There are two towns of interest in the neighbourhood

<sup>1</sup> Major Brooke, R.A., is one of the most popular figures in the Ceylon cricket world. His eleven consisted of six Englishmen and five Ceylonese.



CEYLON A AUSTRALIA CEYLON FIELD



CEYLON A AUSTRALIA- AUSTRALIANS GO OUT TO FIELD



of Colombo, each of which is within a drive of thirty miles. One of them is Negombo, which lies among the cinnamon plantations to the north at the mouth of a river, and is famous for an old Dutch fort and an old Dutch church, and for its fish markets. It is a pretty sight when the fishing fleet returns to port about three o'clock in the afternoon and the scores of little outriggers with square brown sails make their way over the bar into the estuary. I counted 114 of them. Negombo possesses the finest rest-house in Ceylon, a large brand-new building, which is in no way inferior to any of the hotels. Its meals are enormous. On the day of my visit the menu for luncheon announced three sorts of fish, including devilled prawns; fried tripe and onions; grilled chicken; Ceylon curry; a rich pudding; cheese; dessert and coffee. And while we were sitting at table the temperature was 92° in the shade. In summer the cold buffet of a London club provides food suitable for a tropical climate. Such food is never seen in the tropics.

The other town is Kalutara, situated about twenty-six miles to the south, another old Dutch settlement, celebrated in these days for its basket-work. Women travellers come to the place to buy the pretty handbags, woven with dried grass and dyed in many shades of art colours, that are made by the peasants of the district. Although they can be purchased also in Colombo there is a much larger selection in "Basket Hall" at Kalutara, a basket-shop subsidized by government for the sale of native handiwork, and the prices are more than fifty per cent. cheaper. While strolling through the town I happened to pass by the Court House and stood at one of the open windows to watch the proceedings. The presiding magistrate was a Burgher of darker complexion than usual, with a bald head and a supercilious smile, who bit his pencil continuously and seemed much amused by the evidence. A Malay policeman was in the witness-box, an interpreter translating for him. He was being cross-examined by a dusky youth with a receding chin, who spoke in execrable

English. It was a case of murderous assault, the repulsive black man in the dock having set upon the policeman with a knife.

A pleasant day spent on a rubber plantation close to Colombo lingers in my memory, an estate known as the Hanwella Group, of which my friend, Mr. E. Gordon Brooke, is the superintendent. The place is twenty miles from the town, a little farther on than the Kaduwella rest-house and close to the Kelani river. It is an estate of 2000 acres, scattered over a wide area, and has been in existence for twenty-seven years. For the first time since my arrival in Asia I found myself in a bungalow full of choice old furniture, brought from many countries. In former days, when Mr. Brooke began to collect, antique chests and cabinets of Dutch and Portuguese workmanship, massive pieces of mahogany with heavy hinges and handles of brass, were common enough throughout Ceylon; but in these days they are obtainable less easily and fetch high prices. My host has literary tastes also and has a fairly large library. Although books are supposed to deteriorate in the tropics these appeared to have suffered no damage.

Hanwella is a picturesque place. The country is undulating, the plantations being spread over several high hills. Inspection on foot must be a long and arduous task, and I was not surprised to hear that Mr. Brooke used a pony. The factory, where the latex is converted into sheet-rubber, was one of the best-equipped that I had seen, filled with modern machinery. In the hospital—a necessary establishment on every estate—the wards were cool, clean and airy, and the young native doctor in charge of the place seemed to be proud of his work and efficient. Not a single bed was occupied, showing that the locality is healthy.

As a general rule, the superintendent of a rubber estate is not allowed to have a plantation of his own in the neighbourhood of the estate which he manages, and there appears to be good reasons for the interdict. Mr. Brooke, nevertheless, is a privileged person and is a partner with his

chairman in a private property close to the Hanwella Group. Here there are 350 acres under cultivation, but the area is to be extended to 500 acres. It is the counterpart of the Hanwella estate on a smaller scale, with a factory and a hospital and a good roadway. The little Buddhist temple, designed by a local architect, is a thing of beauty.

Its most uncommon possession, however, is a newly-constructed swimming-bath, fed with fresh water from a hillside spring. On the day of my visit it had been filled for the first time, and Mr. Brooke, who is on the best of terms with his coolies, delighted the children by invading their school and declaring a half-holiday, so that they could go bathing. In a few moments the bath was full of laughing, splashing little figures, while we stood above and threw down ten cent pieces. They ducked and scrambled for them at the bottom. Although the water was rather muddy the children retrieved nearly all the coins; and afterwards, when at last they were induced to come out, the big boys, who plunged in at once to search for any money that was left behind, could only discover three pieces. Undoubtedly Mr. Gordon Brooke's swimming-bath will be a great joy to his coolies.

Soon after his arrival in Ceylon, Sir Hugh Clifford indulged in some vague promises with regard to "Municipal Reform," one of the favourite catchwords of the East, which signifies usually the extension of native interference in things which the native is sure to mismanage. Yet, if a Governor of Ceylon is anxious to perform "brave" deeds, there is ample work of more pressing importance, worthy of a strong man's hand. The harbour will have to be modernized immediately, in spite of vested interests, so that Colombo may possess a port equal to that of the small Dutch towns of Java and Sumatra instead of one of the most backward in the whole of Asia. The world's worst railway must be rescued from the government department that has mismanaged it so disgracefully and handed over to a private company under appropriate conditions.

And lastly, the roads throughout the island, which were admirable in the days of horse-drawn vehicles, but are ploughed into furrows now by the wheels of the motor-car, should be placed under the control of a competent authority, and kept in a state of decent repair.

It would be well to send a special commission from Ceylon to Java and to the Malay Peninsula, so that the Anglo-Ceylonese might discover how much more efficiently those two countries arrange their affairs.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### BACK TO ENGLAND

THE *Osterley* of the Orient Line, in which I travelled from Colombo to Naples, seems an old-fashioned ship in these days, although she has a 12,000 tonnage and was one of the crack boats of the company before the war. The smoking-room and the other public saloons are insufficient for the number of passengers; many of the cabins are uncomfortable and much too small. No. 214, which fell to my lot, is too diminutive for human habitation, but might make a satisfactory W.C. The food was excellent, however, as it always is on Orient liners, and the officers and stewards were pleasant and obliging people.

Most of the passengers came from Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, a cheery and unconventional crowd, all looking forward eagerly to a holiday in England. The majority seemed to be opulent and the amount of the fortunes of many of them was disclosed to me by one of the ship's gossips.

"You see that fellow over there," my informant would whisper. "His clippings are worth twenty thousand."

Which signified that the lucky individual had an income of £20,000. The "clippings" of one stout gentleman were said to exceed £100,000. But recent years in Australia had been years of plenty with little drought and consequently sheep-farming had prospered.

The voyage had little incident. In the Red Sea the weather was cool with a head-wind, which seemed to indicate unpleasant conditions in the Mediterranean. At Suez many of the Australians took the

opportunity of paying a flying visit to Cairo, rejoining the ship at Port Said on the following morning. The trip included two torrid railway journeys through the desert, a sufficient deterrent to all those who had visited Egypt previously.

In Lake Timsah, as we were approaching Ismailiya, I saw a method of catching fish that I had never seen before, although this was my sixth passage through the Canal. Two boat-loads of felahin had cast their net in a circle, twenty yards perhaps in diameter. The net, which was buoyed up by a double row of cork floats, hung down below the surface, its meshes forming a round trough about four feet across. When the ring was complete, the men in the boats began to thrash the water with their oars and beat loudly upon a gong, shrieking at the top of their voices at the same time. Evidently, they had enclosed a large shoal, for scores of frightened fish commenced to leap in the air in an effort to escape; but, since none could jump far enough to clear the net, all dropped down into the trap that was prepared for them. The greater the din made by the fishermen the faster the fish jumped, until the net must have contained several hundreds. A crowd of passengers lined the rails of the *Osterley* to watch, and, though most of them laughed at the quaint spectacle, many of the ladies were sorry for the victims.

"Poor little things!" cried some of them.

As usual in April the Mediterranean was cold and stormy, a trying change of climate after the heat of the Suez Canal. Luckily for those on board, the *Osterley* is a fast boat. Leaving Port Said at noon on Sunday we reached Naples at 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning. Here, there was no landing in tenders and small boats as in olden days. The ship came alongside the quay and every one was able to walk ashore. In the Custom House the truculent brigands, who used to examine luggage in pre-war times and levied blackmail upon travellers, had been supplanted by courteous and capable officials, apparently incorruptible.

A similar reformation had taken place throughout Italy. Efficiency seemed to have become the watchword of the whole nation. In each city that I visited—Naples, Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, Stresa—it was the same. Every one was hard at work and happy. The crowds of beggars had vanished; the rapacious cabmen were transformed into honest and amiable folk. All the railway stations possessed an adequate staff; the trains were clean, comfortable and punctual. Both in town and country the people had become busy and prosperous. If a political system is to be judged by its material results no one can deny that Mussolini has discovered the secret of good government.

After travelling in comfort all through Italy the journey from Paris to London was a disagreeable contrast. Although cross-Channel traffic has increased enormously in late years the railway service is no better than it was before the war. Every hour, or every two hours at least, there ought to be an express train from both capitals. By chance, I left the *Gare du Nord* in the first voyage made by the luxurious *Fleche d'Or*, a "Golden Arrow" train, and the newspapers had foretold that hand baggage would be examined en route. This is untrue. At Dover there was the same old indecent scrimmage in the Custom House; and since there are not enough porters for the number of passengers, it is only the physically strong, capable of carrying their own handbags, who can be sure of catching the train to London. The directors of the Southern Railway protest that baggage cannot be examined in the carriages since they do not possess any corridor coaches, which is a confession that their rolling-stock is the most antiquated in the world. Possibly, these gentlemen qualified for their office in "dreamy" Ceylon.

When I had been a few days in London I became conscious that a change had come over the West End. In the streets there were many black people, buck niggers and their womenfolk with rolling eyes and flashing teeth, full of swagger and self-assurance. They were jazz bands-

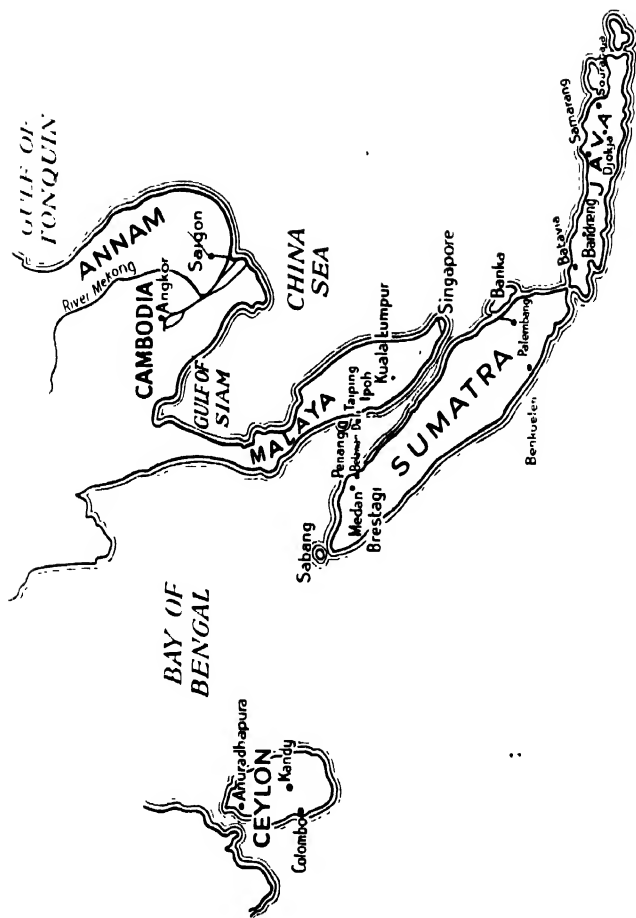
men, cabaret singers and dancers; and also actors and actresses, performing in a revue. Since my departure from England nine months before they had increased and multiplied. With the remembrance of the half-castes of Asia fresh in my mind I could not help shuddering at the sight of these coloured visitors. One feared that London was going to become a "Nigger Heaven."

Why should these beings of an inferior race be allowed to come into the country to take the bread out of the mouths of our own people? Owing to the competition of American films, which we do not tax, there is enough unemployment already among English actors and actresses. A more important reason still may be urged for the exclusion of these black intruders. Since the sensuality of the nigger is insatiable and both the male and female of the species for the most part crave for a white paramour, their presence in our midst for any length of time must result in an increase of the half-caste population. *No measure can be too drastic that will prevent the contamination of our race by the infusion of black blood.* A new law ought to be placed on the Statute Book to the effect that every nigger, who has sexual intercourse with a white woman, shall be liable to the penalty of being flogged and deported.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The nigger is not the sole offender. The number of native students—brown, yellow and black—that comes to England from Asia and Africa is increasing every year. In almost every case these young men seek acquaintance, usually in view of a liaison, with some English girl; and unfortunately, English girls are only too ready to make friends with them, for they have plenty of money to spend. Thus, our prestige as a race is being lowered among the people of the East. Naturally, when the dusky students return home they talk about the complacency of English women and boast of their conquests.

The best of the native races in Asia and Africa resent the interference of European residents with *their* womenfolk. If white students were in the habit of completing their education in northern Africa and southern Asia and behaved as native students do in London, there would be serious trouble. It is high time that we said to our coloured guests: "We are giving you the advantage of our culture and our education. . . . Please to keep your hands off our women!"

When we lose the respect of these people we shall lose our Empire.



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